India and the Indian Ocean 1500 – 1800

Edited by
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For
Charles R. Boxer
and
Holden Furber
A tribute from those who followed.

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Preface

This collection of essays is not the outcome of any conference nor is it quite a volume of the traditional Cambridge History kind meant to chart the frontiers of an established area of enquiry. Basically it is an attempt to meet a need felt by most of our contributors while teaching at their various universities for a volume which will link the study of Indian history with that of the Indian Ocean and at the same time establish working contact between Indian historians and historians engaged in relevant Asian and African areas. With its main emphasis on maritime India, the collection seeks to present the Indian Ocean as a historical unit to scholars, students and readers of more general interest. We have appended bibliographies which, we hope, will be of assistance in further exploration.

This book has been long in the making. Towards its close we lost our dear and valued co-worker Dr. (Mrs.) Indrani Ray, who was engaged in writing a chapter on the French presence in the Indian Ocean — a chapter which will be sorely missed in this collection. A number of colleagues not directly involved in the collection, as it now appears, have helped us with advice and encouragement. Our grateful thanks go in particular to Dr. (Mrs.) Lotika Varadarajan, Professor K. N. Chaudhuri and Professor John F. Richards. A special word of gratitude to Professor S. Arasaratnam who has not only contributed two chapters to the collection, but has had the map for the volume prepared for us by the University Cartographer of the University of New England. We are thankful to Dr. Richard Bingle of the India Office Library and Records and his colleague Dr. J. Losty for responding to our appeal and providing us with the cover illustration for the volume. Finally, we remain grateful to the Oxford University Press, Calcutta and specially our editor for the press, for a very demanding and long-suffering period of working together.

Ashin Das Gupta
M. N. Pearson

1

Introduction I: The State of the Subject

M. N. Pearson

This book is about the history of maritime India from 1500 to 1800, of the Indian Ocean in this period, and of the intricate connections between these two. The focus is often, though not always, on trade and economic history, and for this reason European merchants as well as local traders are covered; nevertheless, a crucial theme is that while the Europeans obviously were present in the ocean area, their role was not central. Rather they participated, with varying success, in an on-going structure.

The Introduction is in two parts. In the first we reflect in general terms on the present state of maritime history, especially that of the Indian Ocean, which was the arena in which India's maritime history was played out. Two subsequent sections consider the geographical limits of the Indian Ocean, and the constants which give a deep structural unity to India's maritime history from 1500 to 1800. The second part of the Introduction draws out the general themes of the various chapters.

Our concern in this book is with people who have a close relationship with the sea and the coast, and who live by exploiting the resources of these areas. (See Reeves, Broeze and McPherson, 'The Maritime Peoples', p. 1; and Pearson, 'Littoral Society', *passim*. For references to works cited, see the Bibliography at the end of this Introduction). History writing focused on these people's activities has a long pedigree in Europe. Accounts of European exploration and expansion by sea began to be written at the same time as the events they described. Maritime affairs have always figured prominently in English historiography. In the late nineteenth century the American Captain Mahan's studies of naval power were very influential, though perhaps more on politicians than on historians. From the mid-nineteenth century the Hakluyt Society and the Linschoten Society have printed scrupulously edited and translated texts of accounts of travel and discovery, many of which were by sea. These efforts were complemented in Portugal, where many important source materials have been published over the last two centuries. In this century, in both England and Holland, long runs of documents generated by their trading companies have been published. These in turn stimulated numerous studies of the (mostly maritime) activities of these companies. Since World War II the most productive area seems to be studies, usually by French scholars, of maritime matters in the Mediterranean and Atlantic, using Italian, Spanish and some Portuguese material. The works of Fernand Braudel, Pierre Chaunu, and V. Magalhaes Godinho come immediately to mind.

As the interest in maritime history expands, so too does the infrastructure. The *American Neptune* and the *Mariner's Mirror* are journals devoted to maritime matters, and they have been joined recently by the *Great Circle*. R. G. Albion has put us all in his debt with his bibliography of naval and maritime history, while Charles R. Schultz continues to publish his listings of articles in this field of research. Conferences proliferate: two recent ones focused on piracy, and on Captain Cook. At Harvard the post of Professor of Oceanic History and Affairs was instituted.

The first modern study on the Indian Ocean was R. K. Mookerji's survey of Indian shipping, first published in 1912, and revised for its 1957 reprint. This was followed by K. M. Panikkar's *India and the Indian Ocean*, first published in 1945 and with several later editions. The latest, and now standard, history of the Indian Ocean is by Auguste Toussaint, published in French in 1961 and in English in 1966. Toussaint, and later M. Mollat, promoted the International Historical Association of the Indian Ocean, which first met in 1960. The Association's later meetings have concentrated on routes, on the ties between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean and the early trading companies, and on population movements. In Australia too interest in the Indian Ocean is expanding. There is already a standard survey of Australian maritime history by J. P. S. Bach. The *Great Circle*, edited by Frank Broeze, publishes many articles to do with the Indian Ocean. The organizers of the International Conference on Indian Ocean Studies, held at Perth in 1979, led by Peter Reeves, have recently produced an excellent bibliography on ports and port-cities in the Indian Ocean. The Second International Conference on Indian Ocean Studies was held at Perth in December 1984 and its proceedings are available in microfiche. In India too more interest is being shown, thanks especially to a conference on Indian Maritime History at Santiniketan in March 1979, and to the work of the Indian Maritime History Society, which is being helped by the Indian Navy. A conference on Indian Ocean Studies was held in February 1985 in Delhi, as a pre-meeting for the Indian Ocean panel at the International History Congress at Stuttgart which was held later in the year.

Our book is about India and the Indian Ocean, not on the Indian Ocean in general. The distinction is crucial. In part this choice reflects our training as historians of India, rather than as maritime historians, but there are other reasons too.

We see maritime history as interacting with activities on the land all the

time. We have no interest in simply describing what happened at sea; for us, any history of the ocean area must focus on some land area, whether it be an island or a continent. We lack the space or the expertise to be able to consider adequately the interaction between activities on land and sea over the whole vast ocean. Thus a choice had to be made, and our interests and training pointed to India.

Our main purpose in this book is not to produce new research articles on esoteric or detailed topics. Rather, we have tried to draw benchmarks, and tell our readers what the state of the field is at present.

In essence the contributors are saying: Here is what we know at present about coastal Malabar in the sixteenth century; this is the state of knowledge on maritime relations between India and southeast Asia; these seem to be the main trends in the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century. We hope the volume will have a heuristic value, simply because it attempts to sum up our present knowledge; the bibliographies at the end of each chapter also contribute to this. We have also paid some attention to possible future lines of research, or at least to what we consider would be worth more investigation. We are all only too well aware of the many gaps in our existing knowledge, gaps no doubt reflected in most of the chapters of this book. In short, we hope this book will serve to introduce the field, and encourage new research.

The history that we are putting together is that of maritime India, which in turn involves the affairs of the Indian Ocean, the two being held together in mutual reciprocity. There are five areas of research which impinge on our field but are not identical with it. The history we are writing is not the same as naval history; rather it subsumes this subfield of research. The study of tactics and battles at sea certainly has its own fascination, but it is not an area with which we are much concerned in this book. Thus we make no attempt to build on Ballard's *Rulers of the Indian Ocean*, or on the work of such followers as A. C. Roy, O. K. Nambiar, M. Malgonkar, and most recently P. Padfield. Nor do we see maritime history as simply activities at sea, an area of study which terminates once people and goods move on to dry land. A case in point is Antonio da Silva Rego's article 'Some Problems of the Maritime History of the Indian Ocean,' in *Océan Indien et Mediterranée*. The problems he finds are 'some questions concerned with the Losbon-Goa and return voyages, especially the human aspect,' and in detail he covers the following topics: times of leaving Lisbon and Goa; training of pilots and sailors; secrets concerning this route; ships built in India; effects of Dutch and English hostility in the seventeenth century; shipwrecks; the need to study the (undefined) economic history of the Indian Ocean; the natural history of the ocean; life on board ships; the place of Mozambique Island in this route. M. Mollat's comment, which hardly helped to expand the field, was that we must also study terrestrial routes which link the oceans. (pp. 37-48).

We agree that all these topics are interesting, and need to be investigated. Indeed, most of them are mentioned in this book in one place or another. But for us, this sort of history is too specialized, and restrictive, making it impossible to consider many general historiographical problems.

The third thing which maritime history is not, in our view, is an exercise in nationalism or imperialism. This entire collection is a sustained argument against the Eurocentric vision which projects the imperialist approach. A few words on nationalism therefore are in order at this point. R. K. Mookerji's *Indian Shipping* should be seen now as an engagingly enthusiastic nationalistic history, designed to show the central role of seagoing Indians in the Indian Ocean, and indeed sometimes the world, for 2000 years. As a specific example of Mookerji's claims, we are told that India in the Hindu period 'owed her capture of the world markets' to her inventions in applied chemistry (p. 128, and generally pp. 126-9). K. M. Panikkar's *India and the Indian Ocean* is concerned in emphasizing India's past role in naval and maritime matters, and to highlight naval battles where Indian forces did well. He gives naval power a very prominent place in India's destiny: 'In fact it may be truly said that India never lost her independence till she lost the command of the sea in the first decade of the sixteenth century' (p. 7). Earlier land conquerors, we are told, were Indianized and so do not count.

Given then that from 1500 'till today the Ocean has dominated India' (p. 8), Panikkar's urging that independent India needs an adequate navy is explicable (pp. 14-16). These themes are picked up in Sridharan's *Maritime History*. The author was a serving officer, and his book was published by the Indian Government. These circumstances no doubt explain the rationale of the book, which is about 'the maritime developments of which we should be justifiably proud, and the study of which makes a person learn the lessons of history and appreciate better the need for the country's defence by maritime forces' (p. vii). We have no desire to belittle the achievements, objectives or motives of Mookerji, Panikkar and Sridharan. All three wrote history with conscious present purpose. These are not ours. In essence they were writing history of a different sort, and for a different purpose, than those of the present book.

We do not want to follow historians who include an ocean in their title, but are really writing exclusively about inland societies. A recent example and an outstanding book, is Ralph Davis's *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies*. This is part of a series called 'World Economic History,' and is about the economic history of the countries on the western fringe of Europe and their colonies. 'There was an Atlantic economy; but it was subsidiary to, a modification and enhancement of, the economies of the individual countries of the Atlantic seaboard that took part in it' (pp. xi, xiii). There is in the book no sense of the sea. It is, explicitly, an economic history of western Europe in the period, and their colonies, which happened to be separated by the Atlantic Ocean.

Finally, we see the relation between activities on land and sea as symbiotic, but asymmetric. Most of the time sea activities had less influence on those on land than vice versa. Here we seem to part company with many of the historians we have already mentioned, notably Toussaint, Panikkar and Mookerji. Man's greatest achievements, and mundane actions, normally take place on the land. Sometimes they are influenced by the sea, but more often events at sea are less significant that those on land. This point will, we hope, be adequately borne out in the chapters which follow. We would only add that here we claim as support the opinions of three very famous historians of the sea. Ballard said 'sea power, however necessary in any given situation, is not an end in itself, but a means to an end' (p. vi). Similarly, Mahan aimed 'at putting maritime interests in the foreground, without divorcing them, however, from their surroundings of cause and effect in general history' (p. vi). Fernand Braudel, agrees, as witnessed by his deflation of the significance of the famous battle of Lepanto in 1571: 'All one can say is that after all Lepanto was only a naval victory and that in this maritime world surrounded and barred by land-masses, such an encounter could not destroy Turkey's roots, which went deep into the continental interior '(p. 1104).

Our consideration of the limited interests of the strictly naval, and exclusively 'at sea' historians, the overt present purposes of others, and the inward, land orientation of still others does have the merit of forcing us to face squarely what we are about. It is disappointing that past writers whom we admire have with one exception chosen not to reflect on the nature of their enterprise. Thus J. H. Parry, formerly Professor of Oceanic History and Affairs at Harvard, published many memorable books in this area, but to our knowledge did not attempt to define the field. Nor has O. H. K. Spate, at least not so far in his outstanding work in progress, *The Pacific since Magellan*. But it seems his definition is implicitly rather wide-ranging, for he includes copious details on Spanish conquests in South America, presumably because he considers this to be necessary background for Spanish efforts in the Pacific. Certainly his two volumes are much more integrated than E. S. Dodge's *Islands and Empires*. This unfortunate author was asked to combine two quite different subjects, the Pacific and east Asia. The result is really two books.

Chaunu's outstanding work, so very strong methodologically, does not address itself to a definition of maritime history as such. G. V. Scammell does, but very cautiously. He discusses his use of the term 'maritime empires' in the subtitle of his book, and says empire 'is here taken to mean the dominion exercised by one people or state over other peoples, lands or states, whether this arises from armed conquest or from the establishment or imposition of economic domination. Maritime is taken to mean that such authority or influence was primarily, though not necessarily entirely, created and exercised by some form of seapower' (p. xiii). S. D. Goitein's magisterial *A Mediterranean Society*, despite its title, does not discuss the concept of unity around an ocean. By implication he sees Mediterranean society as including all people living on the edge of this sea, though his book focuses on Jews who live on this littoral. In our own area, Toussaint admires the work of Braudel, but does not try to follow this master to define the limits of maritime history, or oceanic history. But by implication his definition is very broad: thus the list of 'Memorable Dates' at the end of *History of the Indian Ocean* includes the founding of the Mughal Empire, and the attainment of independence in the countries of the littoral.

The exception is of course Fernand Braudel, and we need to look at his influential work with some care. It must, however, be stressed at once that his concern is subtlely, but significantly, different from ours. He is explicitly writing about the Mediterranean Sea as a unity. We, however, are not writing a history of the whole of the Indian Ocean, but rather of the maritime history of India. The whole ocean is there often in this book, but the focus is always on India. Nor are we concerned here with his brilliant three-way division, the concepts of geographical time, of social time, and of indivudual time. These have been very widely discussed in the historical profession, and in fact their influence can be seen in some of the pieces which make up this book.

We do not think that Braudel would have described himself primarily as a maritime historian, yet his observations in this area are most relevant for us. We may first note a charming, and for us encouraging, passing remark in a symposium directed by H. L. Wesseling. He claimed that the Russian economy centred on a 'landlocked heart, which means a bad heart—the good hearts are the maritime ones' (p. 22).

An important theme in Braudel is the unity of land and sea in the Mediterranean area:

> Its life is linked to the land, its poetry more than half-rural, its sailors may turn peasant with the seasons; it is the sea of vineyards and olive trees just as much as the sea of the long-oared galleys and the roundships of merchants and its history can no more be separated from that of the lands surrounding it than the clay can be separated from the hands of the potter who shapes it (p. 17).

Similarly, the region itself can be clearly defined: in this second edition he still stresses 'the unity and coherence of the Mediterranean region . . . the whole sea shared a common destiny, a heavy one indeed, with identical problems and general trends if not identical consequences' (p. 14). Nevertheless, the sea as such is not only a uniter: 'The sea is everything it is said to be: it provides unity, transport, the means of exchange and intercourse, if man is prepared to make an effort and pay a price. But it has also been the great divider, the obstacle that had to be overcome' (p. 276).

As to the problem of where the Mediterranean region ends, it must be said that Braudel is more poetic than exact. Thus he notes that in times of great expansion 'the historical Mediterranean seems to be a concept of infinite expansion. But how far in space are we justified in extending it? This is a difficult and controversial question; but if we are seeking to explain the history of the Mediterranean, it is perhaps the fundamental question we should be asking' (p. 167). Very promising, but do the following remarks, for all their flourish and insight, really lead us to a solution? The Mediterranean is a very wide zone. 'We might compare it to an electric or magnetic field, or more simply to a radiant centre whose light grows less as one moves away from it, without one's being able to define the exact boundary between light and shade' (p. 168). And again, 'The circulation of men and of goods, both material and intangible, formed concentric circles round the Mediterranean. We should imagine a hundred frontiers, not one, some political, some economic, and some cultural' (p. 170).

From the point of view of Asian history, Braudel is most vulnerable in his observations on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. This is not just Asian-centric parochialism on our part; it is a serious flaw in the whole concept. He is explicitly writing of the Mediterranean world, which includes *all* areas surrounding the sea. Nevertheless, it is not too much to say that his book really is a history of the northern, or Christian, Mediterranean world. There are, of course, limits to the time and linguistic competence of any historian, even Braudel, and it is true, as he notes, that there are as yet very few good monographs available for synthesis on the history of Ottoman Turkey and the Maghreb. Even so, these areas, half of his own concept of the Mediterranean world, are really shamefully neglected. How revealing are the following two remarks: 'in Islam, that is, on the outskirts of the Mediterranean world . . . ' and 'the endless ribbon of blank coastline, where it is often difficult to land, stretching from southern Syria to Gabes and Djerba in Tunisia, the long barren front of a *foreign* world looking on to the Mediterranean' (pp. 538, 162, his italics).

More specifically, there is a distressing and very old-fashioned tendency to talk of 'the Orient,' 'the East,' and 'Islam' as though these are some sort of unity. Equally *passé* are the depiction of Islam as the desert, and the mention of 'an exotic, perfumed civilization of the East' (pp. 187, 780). And what are we to make of his claim that the bill of exchange 'made only exceptional appearances in Islam, so exceptional indeed as to suggest it was unknown in the East,' or the mention of 'Cambay (at the mouth of the Indus region) . . .' (pp. 465, 550). It must be said that, despite the brilliant contribution of the three concepts of time, these problems almost vitiate the book.

Braudel specifically regrets the lack of data available from the Muslim part of the sea, and laments the absence of sound research based on the Ottoman archives. Soon after the original publication of his book, a Turkish historian produced an article pointing to data in the Constantinople archives which would serve to provide details on population, prices, and bullion movements and so fill the gap Braudel lamented. Barkan's article, revealingly enough, appeared in *Annales*. It fails to address Braudel's fundamental ethnocentrism, something which must be apparent to any Asian historian reading his book. Recently Braudel's basic theme of a unified 'Mediterranean World' has been analysed in detail by an American historian, who uses data from both Spanish and Ottoman archives. Hess focuses on the western Mediterranean, on the region between the far western north African coast and the Pyrenees, and concludes that while there was an 'underlying life rhythm that was culturally neutral,' including for example, inflation, population increase, disease and climatic change, yet 'the main theme of Mediterranean history during the sixteenth century was the cumulative divergence of its two civilizations' (p. 207, and cf. pp. 2-4, 207-11), the Latin Christian and the Turko-Muslim.

For Chaunu and the Atlantic, Eurocentrism is of course less of a problem. Even so, it is interesting to find him writing 'the Atlantic in practice is the oldest ocean on a human scale, the first that has been regularly crossed, and the first to be located at the heart of an economy, even of a civilization. . . ' (VIII, pp. 1, 5). A comparison with the Indian Ocean would, we think, show at least the first three of these claims to be incorrect.

The work of Braudel and others is a source of great inspiration. Nevertheless, their work is not always directly comparable with ours. Braudel is writing about a sea, and a landlocked one at that. He thus faces different, and much less perplexing, problems of definition, compared with the problems we face in defining the limits of the Indian Ocean, a task we must fulfil before we can write about India and the Indian Ocean. Writers on the Indian Ocean, or for that matter Spate on the Pacific, and Chaunu on the Atlantic, are writing about a part of the Great Ocean. Nevertheless, once a delimitation has been arrived at, there then seems little difference in the theoretical problems to be faced. A sea after all is really just smaller than, or part of, an ocean. Both essentially are areas of water more or less surrounded by dry land.

In another area too the masters do not have to confront quite the same problems that we do. This is the matter of the impact of foreigners on the ocean in question. The Mediterranean was always dominated by people from its littoral while the Atlantic is the creation of people from one part of its coasts. The Pacific as a concept is entirely the creation of people from very distant lands, but the notion of an Indian Ocean existed in men's minds before the Portuguese arrived. The historian of the Indian Ocean

has thus to confront the problem of the degree of impact of Europeans, a problem not faced in anything like the same degree by historians of any other ocean.

It is interesting in this respect to investigate names a little more closely. 'Mediterranean' is derived from the Latin for 'middle' and 'land', and 'Pacific' from the Latin for 'peace'. The word 'Atlantic' is derived from Greek mythology, specifically from Mt. Atlas in Morocco. Prior to Columbus, it referred to the sea off west Africa. As the ocean was discovered the area of water referred to as the 'Atlantic Ocean' also expanded, the term being in use in English early in the seventeenth century. The name of the 'lost continent' of Atlantis is of course derived from the same source. 'The Indian Ocean' is simply a translation of the Arabic term *al-bahr al-Hindi*. *Hind* came from Sanskrit to Persian and Arabic, and thence via Greek to Latin. The word 'ocean' travelled the other way, the Arabic *uqiyanus* deriving directly from the Greek *okeanos* and used by the Arabs to refer to the world-encircling southern ocean.

More important is the use of these terms: who first saw these oceans as units? While the concept of a Mediterranean Sea is very old the concept of the Pacific Ocean is a recent, European idea. As Spate says, 'there was not, and could not be, any concept "Pacific" until the limits and lineaments of the Ocean were set: and this was undeniably the work of Europeans . . . until our own day the Pacific was basically a Euro-American creation, though built on an indigenous substructure' (p. ix, and cf. pp. 1-2). As for the Atlantic, regardless of when the name was coined, the concept is obviously European, indeed Iberian and, as Chaunu stresses, was a creation of sixteenth century discoveries and something quite new at that time.

Arab navigational treatises show that Arab sailors had a clear concept of an Indian Ocean remarkably congruent with later European ideas. The usual Arabic term is *al-bahr al-Hindi*, though Steingass's standard Persian dictionary also gives the term *darya'i akhzar*, *darya* being Persian for sea and *akhzar* being an Arabic word meaning usually green. It is true, as Tibbetts notes, that there is some ambiguity over the area to which *al-bahr al-Hindi* refers. Sometimes, perhaps most times, it seems to mean only the Arabian Sea. Yet many of the Arab treatises deal with the modern Indian Ocean as a unity (Tibbetts, pp. 121, 150, 171, 218-9, 358-60, 397).

There was a similar, if dormant, concept by 1500 in Ming China. We refer to the famous voyages of the Muslim eunuch Cheng Ho between 1405 and 1433 (though Chinese contact with east Africa greatly antedates him). His first expedition was very large, numbering 62 ships and 28,000 men. During these expeditions he traversed the whole ocean, touching at such ports as Calicut, Hormuz, Aden and Mogadishu. As is well known, changes in imperial policy then restricted the Chinese to Malacca;

nevertheless, the concept of an Indian Ocean was there, among both Chinese and Arabs, long before Europeans arrived. The Portuguese thus sailed into a *mar das Indias* already well known to some Asians, and conceived of by them as a unity. Neville Chittick has recently made similar claims. He says that the Indian Ocean till about 1500 was 'arguably the largest cultural continuum in the world . . . ' At least in the western part of the basin, 'the coasts had a greater community of culture with each other and with the islands than they had with the land masses of which they form littorals' (Chittick, p. 13).

All this said, we need to confront two problems if we are to write a satisfactory history of India and the Indian Ocean. First, we need to define the geographical limits of the Indian Ocean. Second, we must look generally at common themes and trends, and see to what extent we can talk of unity in the Indian Ocean.

The geographical limits of the Indian Ocean are relatively straightforward. We must note an official chart produced by the Royal Australian Navy Hydrographic Office in 1980, called 'Australia and Adjacent Waters: Limits of the Oceans and Seas.' The limits there defined are those accepted by the International Hydrographic Organization, except that the Australians have created a Southern Ocean, girdling the world around Antarctica. This has not yet been accepted by the IHO, but the argument is there to see this southern body of water as separate. Partly this is nostalgia, for the RAN has thus revived the Arabic 'Uqiyanus', the world-girdling ocean to the south. Its northern limits in our area, as depicted by the RAN, from west to east are a line from the northern extremity of South Georgia to Marion Island (the southern island of the Prince Edward Islands), to the northern point of Iles Crozet, and thence to Cape Leeuwin in Western Australia.

In 1978, the Government of India's National Atlas Organization produced their map of the Indian Ocean. This is not as specific as the Australian version concerning boundaries, but it goes to the Cape of Good Hope in the west, to Antarctica in the south, includes both the Red Sea and Persian Gulf areas, but firmly excludes the Java and South China Seas.

If the Southern Ocean wins agreement, the official Indian Ocean becomes the area to the north of this. In detail, and starting in the northwest, the boundary goes from the southern entrance to the Suez Canal down the east African coast to Cape Agulhas and then due south to the northern boundary of the Southern Ocean. Going east from Suez, the northern boundary follows the Asian coast all the way around to the southeast extremity of the Malay peninsula. The difficult area is Indonesia. Broadly, the IHO includes in the Indian Ocean all the following seas: those of Java, Flores, Timor, Banda, Arafura and Ceram. In brief, their boundary follows the Australian coastline from Cape Leeuwin all the way around to Cape York, goes along the south coast of New Guinea, and thence along the equator to Malaya.

Perhaps landlubbers should not differ with the experts, but it is interesting that Alan Villiers, himself a practical sailor, has rather different ideas (*Monsoon Seas*, pp. 5, 17). He has no concept of a Southern Ocean, and so his limits go south to Antarctica, and east to Tasmania. He sees the Java Sea as more Pacific than Indian, but he does include the Arafura and Timor Seas in the Indian Ocean. Essentially he thinks Indonesia belongs to the Pacific, but the Indian Ocean washes its southern shores. J. de V. Allen, however, goes much further into the Pacific (Allen, p. 138). Our own inclination, based on the role of Malacca as a pivot, a port facing both the west Pacific and the Indian Ocean, would be to exclude both the Java and Timor Seas, but include the Straits of Malacca.

Thus baldly stated, problems appear at once. Are we to forget about a *nau* or East Indiaman once it enters the Atlantic? Obviously not, for prices in Amsterdam and London, a shipwreck in the Atlantic, affected demand for Asian products. If we go up the Red Sea, then why not over to the Mediterranean? And what about the eastern limit? Malacca, and later Batavia, were entrepôts facing several ways of which west was only one. In the sixteenth century, Malacca was famous as the place where Chinese goods, and spices from eastern Indonesia, were available. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, bullion from the Manila galleon entered the Indian Ocean as did the supply from the alternative route from the New World, that coming via the Mediterranean or the Cape of Good Hope. People travelling by sea, whether Gujaratis, *hajjis*, Dutch or English knew nothing of the artificial barriers we have tried to create. Nevertheless, while keeping this in mind, we do need to have some idea about the limits of the ocean. Like the currents and the winds, these really knew no frontiers, yet as a rule of thumb the limits sketched above will have to stand.

A more serious problem is that of subdivisions within the Indian Ocean. A recent interesting idea on subdivision has been put forward in the introduction to the bibliography by Peter Reeves and his colleagues. They find four subdivisions. There is a western Indian Ocean, covering the coast from Cape Town to eastern Iran, and so including the Persian Gulf, a northern segment stretching around the coasts of south Asia, including Burma, an eastern ocean from the Kra Peninsula to western Australia, going east to include all Indonesia and the Philippines, and a southern ocean equivalent to the one described above (pp. 1, 4). As with any such division, there are problems. As one example, and leaving aside the fact that part of their western ocean is to the north of their northern ocean, they divide off Gujarat from the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf areas between which there were the most intimate connections during the whole period covered by our book.

Our second general problem concerns the degree to which we can see the Indian Ocean in our period as a social unity. Certainly the ocean can be considered to be a relatively distinct geographical entity, but to what extent can we draw on Braudel to write of an Indian Ocean world? The ocean encompasses many more diverse areas, and is much more open, than is the Mediterranean. The inhabitants of its littoral ranged from primitive east Africans to notoriously skilful Gujarati merchants and courtly sophisticated rulers and governors. Representatives of all the great religions—Hindus, Muslims of many races, Jews, Parsis, European and indigenous Christians, Buddhists, both Mahayana and Theravada, were present in varying degrees of importance and magnitude. The climate ranges from tropical to mild subtropical, the geography from desert to lush rice paddies.

There are nevertheless some elements of unity. There is, first, an aspect of the climate which does link very closely all parts of the ocean. This is the monsoon winds, which blow in a relatively predictable and set pattern in certain directions at certain times of the year. Thus all ships, whether Arab, Turkish, Gujarati, Malabari or Bengali, which wanted to sail on the great route from Aden to western India had to leave together at roughly the same time to avoid losing their monsoon. As regards India, the best known monsoons, so crucial even today for India's internal economy, as well as sea travel, are the northeast and southwest monsoons. The former prevail from about November to February, and bring little rain except to Coromandel. This was pre-eminently the season for all travel to the west and south. Complementing this was the southwest monsoon, from June to September, on which India's rainfall depends, and which enabled north and east travel. Thus the season for trade from Gujarat to Aden was broadly September to May, for Aden to Malabar, October to February. Ships sailing from Gujarat to Malacca left in February or March (See also Villiers, *Monsoon Seas*, pp. 56-7).

Examples could be listed endlessly : more important are some of the implications of these patterns. It was, for example, impossible to get from the Red Sea to Malacca in one season. Thus traders had to pause in western India, either in Gujarat or Malabar, before proceeding. This fact was of great importance to the prosperity of these regions. As another example of a long distance route, the round trip between Goa and Lisbon took at least eighteen months. On certain routes departures had to be quite precisely timed. To arrive off western India in July during the full force of the southwest monsoon was to court disaster, for great difficulty would be experienced in getting a ship careering along before this gale into any of the harbours of this coast. The object was to arrive as this wind slackened, say in September, but not so late as to be unable to complete the passage. Similarly, homeward bound Portuguese ships were meant to leave as early as possible in the new year so that they could round the Cape of Good Hope before the end of the northeast monsoon. Too often they left too late and had to 'winter' for months in east Africa before continuing their voyage.

Third, thanks to the regularity of the monsoons local merchants could dictate prices to itinerants, for they both knew a traveller had to leave at a certain time, or 'miss the monsoon' and wait nearly a year for the next. Wealthier and better organized groups of merchants solved this problem by leaving some of their members permanently at important ports, like Calicut and Malacca, so that they could buy when prices were low rather than when they had to. The Portuguese also recognized this necessity at once, but in most areas, because of their political aims, they did not just leave an agent or factor but rather built a fort.

This dependence on the monsoons provides an explanation for one of the characteristics of Asia's great port-cities in our period, that is the heterogeneous nature of their populations. The most important of these port-cities were, going clockwise, Aden, and later Mocha, Hormuz, several in the Gulf of Cambay (at different times Diu, Cambay, and Surat), Goa, Calicut, Colombo, Madras, Masulipatnam, Malacca and Acheh. All no doubt rose and fell in importance during our period, but certain common characteristics can be mentioned. In all of them the population was exceedingly diverse, including usually representatives of all the major seafaring communities of the Indian Ocean, and sometimes others from outside: Chinese in Malacca, Europeans in most of them. These various ethnic or social groups tended to live under conditions later known as extraterritoriality. This implied a common residential area, a headman under various titles, use of their own law codes, and considerable inter-group economic co-operation. Here however is an area where we can see part of the transition of the later eighteenth century. In Bombay, an important port-city only from this time, the English were less inclined to allow legal autonomy for the various Indian groups in the town.

As for the influence of geography, these port-cities can be seen as the standard bearers, or focal points, of littoral society. In economic terms one can see difference dictated by geography, such as the productivity and accessibility of the hinterland. Thus the ports of Gujarat drew on the cottons, indigo and salt petre of the interior, while Acheh, Calicut, and later Cochin, exported pepper from their hinterlands. Nevertheless, all of these port-cities also acted as transhipment centres. Some with unproductive interiors, such as Hormuz and Malacca, had this as their almost exclusive role, but even exporting ports funnelled on goods from elsewhere.

Politically all these port-cities had a large, or at least the necessary, degree of autonomy. Some were completely independent, though the port-city ruler could govern an inland area as well. Such were Acheh and Calicut, and Malacca, Goa and Hormuz, both before and after the Portuguese conquered them. Others, such as Surat and Aden, were included in large land empires, yet they had autonomy enough not to be unduly harassed by their inland masters. Here again we see a change late in the eighteenth century; the character of Bombay changed decisively once its ocean-oriented English masters began to acquire more land.

There were various types of ships sailing to these port-cities. At one end of the scale were the innumerable coastal craft, of less than fifty tons, whose ubiquitous presence was most noticeable in relatively sheltered waters like the Gulf of Cambay. Slightly larger coasters were needed to sail on longer coastal voyages, for example from the Persian Gulf around to Sind, or from Coromandel to Bengal. Larger ships still, up to a maximum of perhaps 1,000 tons, were used by preference on long oceanic voyages such as from Aden to Gujarat, or Sri Lanka to Malacca. But much smaller ships could also sail long distances, as indeed they still do today. The first ship to sail around the world, the *Victoria*, was of only 85 Spanish tons. This, however, was a ship designed primarily for exploration rather than trade. On regular trade routes economies of scale, and security requirements necessitated the use of larger ships within the limits of existing technology.

In the sixteenth century, and indeed until quite recently, the ships of the western Indian Ocean were usually made of timber held together by stitches of coir twine. Iron was available in the area, and there are several references to ships using nails in their construction; nevertheless, twine-tied ships were most common. Yet this must have produced weaker ships which needed more maintenance. The explanation for the continuing use of twine is presumably that it was cheaper, universally available, and adequate enough for ships sailing in the Indian Ocean. European-built ships sailing in the Indian Ocean used iron nails. This was a necessity in the case of the great ships which had to reach Europe through Atlantic storms, while in the case of their inter-Asian shipping the use of nails was required because they made for stronger ship which could carry and fire cannon.

The navigators of all these ships in Asian waters relied more on accumulated oral knowledge than on any other navigational aids. The compass and charts were in use, as was an instrument for measuring altitudes, but it is unclear whether these were widely used in the ocean, at least in the earlier part of our period. Similarly, by the time they entered the ocean Portuguese navigators could work out their position by a combination of observed latitude and dead-reckoning. They used a compass, a simple astrolabe, and a quadrant, and also had reasonable nautical charts and written sailing directions, called *roteiros*. Yet in practice most navigators in the Indian Ocean, in the sixteenth century and even later relied mostly on 'feel' and experience. Star sightings, the colour and run of the water, seaweed, birds and fish all helped here.

The standard rigging on Indian Ocean ships was lateen sails: the larger Portuguese ships combined square rig and lateen sails on several masts. These were the famous *naus*, or great ships which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries really meant a carrack, though in practice the word was also used for heavily armed galleons. Portuguese ships were not necessarily bigger than Asian (though in the course of the sixteenth century, *naus* increased from perhaps 400 tons burthen to over 1,000 tons), but they did carry cannon as a matter of course, while at first Asian ships did not (Boxer, *Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, pp. 27-8, 207-8).

Here, too, there are indications of changes. As we just noted, Portuguese ships got bigger during the sixteenth century. In the next century, the ships of the northern Europeans, that is, the Dutch and the English, were much smaller than the bigger Portuguese ones. Ship sizes were dictated by requirements, big was not necessarily better. Thus, for example, when Aden was the great entrepôt for the Red Sea, with goods being transhipped there to smaller craft and so taken into the Red Sea, the ships coming into Aden, from Acheh, and especially from Gujarat, were comparative monsters of perhaps 1,000 tons. In the seventeenth century, Mocha replaced Aden as the great entrepôt. Mocha is located past the treacherous and narrow entrance to the Red Sea, the Bab al-Mandab. Large ships were no longer superior, so in the second half of the seventeenth century the Gujarati-Mocha trade was done in medium sized ships of about 200 tons.

Several different sorts of people were to be found on these Indian Ocean ships. The vast majority of the passengers were the ubiquitous small traders or pedlars, trading for themselves or as agents for a shore-based merchants. On locally-owned ships the commander was the *nakhoda*, but he was seldom the owner. The owner or owners typically did not sail, they were wealthy merchants, or members of the political élite. The *nakhoda* was not the navigator—indeed on the Mughal *hajj* ships he was a *mansabdar*. On most ships, the *nakhoda* was an eminent merchant, but he was also the agent of the owners of the ship, and often also an agent for other merchants. On Indian ships the navigator was called the *sarang*, and the headman of the sailors the *tandel*, but apparently neither of these, nor the rest of the crew, received salaries from the owners of the cargo or the ship. Rather, they all lived by being allowed to carry their own trade goods free of charge on board the ship. On some ships, perhaps those owned by a ruler, salaries may have been paid, for Abul Fazl's later sixteenth century work, *Ain-i Akbari* gives lists of salaries for various crewmen. A. J. Qaisar's chapter provides copious detail on all this.

This sort of schematization really only applies to crews on the few larger ships: the vast bulk of shipping in the Indian Ocean was of less than one hundred tons and carried a very small crew indeed. (Alan Villiers' *Sons of Sinbad* and more recently E. B. Martin's *Cargoes of the East* give excellent impressions of life on board such ships in the Arabian Sea in this century). There were other variations also. In the Bay of Bengal, junk-type ships were often found. The *hajj* ships, while they carried cargo, were unique in that they were commanded by a Mughal noble, and carried large number of passengers. Portuguese ships were also a little different, for they used nails in their construction and the bigger ones were often owned by the Portuguese state. On Portuguese ships bound for Portugal many of the crew were Portuguese, but on their inter-Asian ships usually only a handful of Portuguese would be found.

Two other sorts of seafarers must be mentioned here. First are fishermen. We know almost nothing about them during the period covered by this book. All that can be said is that those of them who were Hindu were certainly very low caste. They clearly operated off all the coasts with which we are concerned. It is unlikely that they would venture far into the sea, for they were poor people unable to afford large ships. While their orientation was very largely towards the sea, it must be stressed that they were not solely sea-oriented for they made their modest livings from selling fish to landlubbers. Being hereditary sailors, these fishermen appear sometimes to have taken service as seamen on larger ships.

We know a little more about the second group, that is, pirates. The first difficulty, however, is to decide exactly who is a pirate. There are very subtle shadings between a trader and a pirate, and between a navy ship and a pirate ship. Some traders, it is clear, also indulged in piracy if the opportunity was offered, as memorably encapsulated in the description of a Malabari voyage off the western Indian coast in the sixteenth century, 'the object of the voyage being *mostly* trade'. As for the other shading, there is certainly a unity here. Until the arrival of royal French and English navies, mostly in the eighteenth century, many pirates were at other times members of the navy of the Portuguese king, of the Zamorin of Calicut, or of Kanhoji Angria or other political leaders. These ships simply at times used their military potential to seize a likely opportunity. Thus sixteenth century records, both Portuguese and Muslim, bristle with complaints of Portuguese warships plundering local ships, including those in possession of official Portuguese passes. Similarly, the Kunjalis were usually at best privateers, loosely subordinate to the Zamorin of Calicut, and at times they were simply pirates.

Leaving these ambiguities aside, pure piracy was common in the Indian Ocean in our period. The Persian Gulf, western India and the Gulf of Siam seem to have been particularly infested, while further east the coasts of Ming China were constantly harassed by the dreaded Wako pirates during the sixteenth century. In these enterprises there were no national distinctions; Portuguese pirates attacked other Portuguese ships as well as local craft, as did others. Similarly, all countries, whether European or Asian, with subjects in the Indian Ocean area contributed their share to piracy. It is possible, in fact, that motivations for turning to piracy were also common. Asians whose trade was taken from them by local cartels or European monopolies turned to piracy, but many European pirates seem also to have been people frozen out of Asian trade by the monopolies enjoyed by the Dutch and English companies.

One can thus see considerable unity and continuity in matters of monsoons, ports, ships and sailors. There were other elements of unity too. An obvious one was created by long-distance trade itself. Middle Eastern merchants traded to western India, and to Malacca and Acheh. Gujaratis traded over whole area of the ocean, from east Africa to Malacca, as did the Europeans. Indeed, trade even linked the ocean with other areas: Chinese traders in Malacca were based on south China, Muslim merchants linked the ocean with the Middle East and the Mediterranean, the European networks stretched all the way from Japan through the ocean and so to Europe. Many shorter routes also linked particular areas.

A similar uniting factor is to be found in the widespread distribution of certain products from particular areas, both luxuries and necessities. Precious stones and gold and silver are found in only a few areas—excluding imports from outside the ocean, gold came mostly from the Malay world, while precious stones were found in Sri Lanka, Golconda and Borneo—yet they were desired by the economic and political élite all over the areas. Spices and pepper came from defined and limited production areas (mace, nutmeg and cloves from the so-called Spice Islands in eastern Indonesia; cinnamon from Sri Lanka; pepper from Malaya, Sumatra and western India) but were sold throughout the area and far beyond it. For the whole area in the sixteenth century and later, cotton came from one of the three great production areas of India: Gujarat, Coromandel or Bengal. The élite could afford silk: again the areas producing silk were limited to parts of India, Iran and China. But the vast bulk of the inhabitants of the Indian Ocean area in our whole period wore Indian cottons. Here is a clear uniting factor. Even food was traded over fairly long distances, as from Bengal to Malacca, and from Gujarat to Goa.

Further strands of unity were created by religious activities among some communities. In the sixteenth century, an important Parsi leader moved from Iran to Gujarat, and ties between these two areas continued. Buddhist pilgrims from east and southeast Asia still came to the holy places associated with the Buddha in north India. Hindus travelled little for religious reasons; indeed, there were prohibitions against their travelling by sea. There were two exceptions. Those resident outside India would return home on occasion, or at least, if possible, to die. Some Brahmins did travel by sea, in order to serve Indian communities resident overseas.

The main travellers were Muslims. Their important link was with the Red Sea and the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina. It is obligatory for Muslims to make the *hajj* to Mecca once during their lifetime. No doubt most Muslims around most of the Indian Ocean in our period were unable to afford the long journey. Nevertheless, the role of those who could was crucial. Pilgrims would often spend some time studying in the Holy Cities, and then return as *hajjis* to an honoured and influential position in their local milieu. Thus orthodox trends in Islamic knowledge, especially in such areas as theology and philosophy, were widely disseminated.

The *hajj* also served to increase Muslim solidarity. A Muslim in Mecca could not help but be impressed by the unity in diversity of the Muslim world. Similarly, a *hajji* in his own society could raise Muslim consciousness, and incidentally exacerbate differences with surrounding non-Muslim populations.

The *hajj* also fostered a great trade network. Nearly all pilgrims also traded, if only to finance their voyages, and this made their Holy Cities and their port Jiddah great entrepôts, where were to be found goods from wherever in the world there were Muslims. We must, however, be careful not to go on from this to say that all Muslim trade to the Red Sea was done by *hajjis*. Some of it was in fact done by Hindus and other non-Muslims, while no doubt many Muslims also traded with Jiddah, or Mocha, these being great trade centres, without necessarily making the *hajj*.

From India, the journey to the Red Sea was most conveniently made by sea from Gujarat, although there appears to have been a large land traffic also. Sea travel from Gujarat may have increased after Gujarat's incorporation into the Mughal Empire in 1572-73. There are late sixteenth and seventeenth century accounts of one or more large, state-owned, ships making the passage from Surat to Jiddah each season, with some thousands of pilgrims and many trade goods on board. We know little of the traffic from Deccan, or from southeast Asia or east Africa, but one has to assume it also was substantial. A full investigation into this matter which is of crucial importance to the religious, social and economic history of medieval Muslim India, is urgently needed.

There is also evidence of Muslims from Arabia, and from Gujarat and Bengal, travelling widely to east Africa and Indonesia, with the primary purpose of spreading Islam, or ministering to existing Muslim communities. Here as elsewhere, divisions done for heuristic reasons distort a more complex reality: *hajjis* traded, as well as fulfilling religious obligations; itinerant Sufis travelled on merchant ships, were often associated with particular merchant communities, and no doubt traded themselves.

The establishment of Roman Catholicism in Asia during the first century of our period similarly created links across the ocean. Portuguese missionaries, based on Goa and ultimately responsible to Lisbon and Rome, travelled all over the ocean and its littoral. Those Catholics suspected of back-sliding were sent to Goa for examination by the Inquisition, established in 1560. Perhaps more important, some Asian wanting admission to the priesthood were trained together in a seminary in

Goa. People thus trained, no matter how diverse their backgrounds, emerged with a common vocation, a common ethos, and a common language of Latin. C. R. Boxer has listed for us the 110 pupils in the Jesuit College of St. Paul in Goa in 1556. Of the total, 44 were Portuguese and mestizos, 13 came from Malabar, 21 from the area surrounding Goa, and five from the interior Deccan sultanates. The others were even more diverse: five Chinese, five Bengalis, two Peguans, three east African Bantus, one Gujarati, one Armenian, six Abyssinians, and five Muslim converts. The main part of their curriculm was Latin and theology, but they also had to keep up knowledge of their own vernaculars. Boxer stresses that the multi-racial character of this intitution was unique. Nor did 'natives' get very far in the church hierarchy, being destined to become only secular priests. Yet the point remains that the existence of Catholic clergy and converts did create one more element of unity in Asian littoral society (Boxer, *Seaborne Empire*, p. 250).

Another cultural link is that of language. Travellers obviously need to be able to converse with other people, either through an interpreter or on their own. In the fifteenth century the dominant long-distance traders were Muslims, and their *lingua franca* was presumably a form of either Arabic or Persian. Again, we know all too little about this, but one would expect this to continue in the sixteenth century and later. Presumably resident Muslims in say Malacca or Coromandel would be able to translate to the local language. During the sixteenth century, Portuguese became a widely understood language in coastal areas, such as Sri Lanka, Macassar, the Bay of Bengal area in general and the Moluccas. Indeed, for centuries after this Portuguese continued to fulfil this role, even in Dutch-ruled areas like the Cape of Good Hope and Batavia.

One final linking element, a political one, appeared during the sixteenth century. This was the presence of the Portuguese, with their string of coastal forts all along the littoral. Portuguese policy was in theory uniquely centralized: the dominant authority in each fort was the captain, who was responsible to the governor or viceroy in Goa, and he in turn to the king in Lisbon, or after 1580, Madrid. This then was a notable attempt to create a coordinated network of political and military links over the whole ocean. In the terminology of L. F. Thomaz, the whole empire can be seen as a 'net' linking various 'spaces'. This centralization meant that Portuguese policy, while it did change a little during the century, was at any one time uniform in the ocean area. In practice Portuguese actions often deviated from the instructions sent from Lisbon. The responses to Portuguese policy were various, and depended on the interests and strengths of the Asian ruler or trade concerned. There was no united 'Asian' reaction to the Portuguese, and as we will see the Portuguese attempted but did not necessarily achieve the establishment of an overarching maritime unity under their dominatiion in the Indian Ocean. Nevertheless, even if only theoretically, this attempt obviously did create a new uniting link, a political and military one, in the ocean.

This attempt at political unity turned out to be rather atypical of our period, for the case of the English and Dutch, until around the mid-eighteenth century is rather different. They added two more groups to the existing list of participants in Indian Ocean trade, and like the Portuguese traded over longer distances by sea than did any Asian. Politically, however, their aims were very different from those of the Portuguese. The English remained apolitical as much as possible. The Dutch, through their attempt to monopolize the spice trade, obviously did enter politics, and by and large did achieve their aim. In the seventeenth century a considerable part of the Asian spice trade remained in their hands. Both countries issued passes to local trade ships, as did some Asian coastal states, but in the absence of a monopoly such as that claimed by the Portuguese this had little effect.

Many of these themes, of unity and also diversity, will be taken up in detail in later chapters. A very interesting alternative analysis has recently been put forward by J. de V. Allen. He finds three layers of unity: racial, provided by immigration; cultural, radiating out from India; religious, based on Islam. All three were reinforced and refreshed by constant movements of people. He is also concerned with the problem of whether one can find a single overarching 'culture' in the Indian Ocean, which links and subsumes the various regional ones. (Allen, *passim*, and especially pp 138-40, 149).

What we want to stress, in concluding this section of the Introduction, is what we see as the fundamental theme of this book. We see the structure which we have just sketched, and which will be elaborated in later chapters, as showing remarkable continuity and resilience. The pattern is very much one in which few changes occur for most of our period. We will see both Europeans and Asians working in, and in a sense, controlled by this structure. The change comes only late in the eighteenth century, and in a way it is an endogamous change. Europeans finally burst out, and changed this structure, but they exploded from within an Asian context.

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2

Introduction II : The Story

Ashin Das Gupta

From the time the Portuguese arrived in the Indian Ocean to the time that European colonial empires were established in the area, maritime India played a pivotal role in holding the ocean together for its historians. For much of the time the Indian empire of the Mughals created conditions for Indian shipping and Indian maritime merchants to cover the ocean with sea-lanes hinged upon the Indian coasts. Pilgrims for the *hajj*, travelling from the east towards the west, transhipped at Indian ports. Islamic preachers leap-frogged along maritime Asia using some of the major Indian havens. The export of Indian textiles covered every important Indian Ocean port while the barter between Indonesian spice and Indian cloth formed an important part of the economic network of the ocean. Portuguese Goa drew important trading arteries together in the sixteenth century, and the British built their Indian Ocean structure in the later eighteenth century based along the Indian coasts.

At the western end of the ocean the two Islamic states, the Ottoman empire, which controlled Egypt, the Red Sea, Syria and Iraq, and the Safavid empire, which controlled Persia and the Persian Gulf were important forces in shaping the Indian Ocean. The Arabs obviously and the Persians less obtrusively contributed to the development of Indian Ocean history. The annual pilgrimage of the *hajj* helped the growth of the largest market for the Indian Ocean merchant. The Ottoman empire funnelled a large amount of American silver into the oceanic system. The Safavids assisted in the weakening of the Portuguese maritime empire and, in their own decline, made way for the rise of maritime Arab tribes which contributed importantly to the changing history of the ocean. The east coast of Africa was linked more closely to western Asian ports than to India, and the resurgence of Arab shipping and the reappearance of the Arab merchant virtually all over the Indian Ocean at the turn of the nineteenth century are significant factors for the historian of the times.

At the eastern end, the network of junk trading linked the southern Chinese coast with the Indian Ocean. At Malacca and Acheh, at Bantam and Patani, the shipping lanes of these two different systems came to mingle. The oceanic policies of the Ming and the Ching (Manchu) empires of China affected the Indian Ocean commerce. Developments in maritime China rearranged navigation in the China Seas, led to Chinese migration to southeast Asia and growth of cities like Batavia, so vital for the understanding of the Indian Ocean. The shipping of Java formed a part of both the systems, and the lanes of the spice trade often found the Arab and the Indian, the Javanese and the Chinese on a common pursuit. In the later eighteenth century the junk routes were importantly penetrated by the British private trader, while from early in the century some of the Spanish silver found its way to Madras via Manila.

While we see the Indian Ocean as pivoting round the Indian peninsula, it is important to remember its multiple faces. The Arab and the Persian in the west and the Chinese and the Malay in the east shaped the ocean, while the Swahili coast and the islands contributed to its richness. The European factor was among the most important in moulding the history of the three hundred years we review. No one would wish to replace a Eurocentric view by an Indocentric approach, and the effort in this collection has been throughout to see the European as a factor within the structure of the Indian Ocean.

It is rewarding to try and form comparative assessments of problems common to distinct areas. Thus for instance, the role of the merchant in society, polity and the economy varied considerably from China at one end and Arabia at the other. The relationship between the state and the merchant, which forms an important part of any such assessment, was quite different in different parts of the Indian Ocean. Shipping in the ocean with the junk in the east and the dhow in the west, even if both be terms devised by the European, were built to suit varying conditions and differing demands. The role of the sailor was one kind in the Malay world and another in maritime India. Piracy in the ocean took distinct forms according to the social and political context. Understanding of the ocean will be deepened if such comparisons can be successfully attempted.

Beyond all these contrasts there were economic and financial connections in the networks of oceanic trade. The merchants of the Indian Ocean evolved instrumentalities of commerce to facilitate the exchange and there were well understood and highly developed channels of remittance and supply. Bullion, so scarce in the oceanic area itself, reached the littoral states through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf at one end and via Manila at the other with the Europeans bringing in precious metals round the Cape of Good Hope. Like the trade in Indian textiles, the Indian bill of exchange probably spanned the ocean although little enough is known about the subject.

To see the Indian Ocean steadily and as a whole, to see it in its multiplicity and appreciate its contrasting richness and finally to tell its

story in a coherent manner is probably a task beyond scholarly resources at the moment. The essays which follow have made a concerted attempt, and we shall now briefly set out their main contours, discussing in relatively greater detail areas lightly covered and indicating problems which promise rewarding solutions.

Genevieve Bouchon and Denys Lombard in their contribution notice a 'prodigious movement' in the Indian Ocean during the fifteenth century before the arrival of the Portuguese. This can be called the Islamization of the ocean littoral and it was to remain in force throughout our period. The major bases of Islam were, of course, in the Red Sea, the Hadramaut and the Persian Gulf, with Aden and Hormuz as principal centres. Islam had spread along the east coast of Africa and as M.D. Newitt makes clear in his detailed treatment of the area, the process had begun probably as early as the tenth century. In India, the principal port at Cambay was a stronghold of Islam, as were ports in Bengal, while Calicut accommodated major settlements of Muslim businessmen. Islam was leap-frogging along the coasts of the Indonesian islands, one principal conquest being Samudra-Pasai late in the thirteenth century. The conversion of the ruler of Malacca early in the fifteenth century was a landmark in the Islamic penetration of maritime Asia. The Islamic pilgrimage of the *hajj* of which we still wait a proper study drew together the Muslim network of the ocean and connected it with the diaspora further to the west. However this network while clearly a real and dynamic force for several hundred years remains intangible for the historian. The ethnic elements within the Islamic fold were obviously important and more than one of our contributors specifically stress the role of the Gujaratis in the expansion of trade and the spread of Islam during the fifteenth century.

The early years of the fifteenth century saw what can be called the last flowering of the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean. Recently Simon Digby in his important contribution to the *Cambridge Economic History of India* has drawn our attention to the importance of the Chinese factor in the three hundred years preceding the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. The sequence of shipping as he works it out would give the initiative to the Persians in the navigation to China across the ocean in the seventh century. By the ninth century, Persian shipping had been largely supplanted by that of the Arabs at Canton. Within two hundred years, it was the large Indian ship from the Coromandel coast which was the principal carrier of the trade from southern China into the Indian Ocean. The Chinese junk, the largest of these vessels, set the Indian ships aside in the twelfth century and early in the fifteenth century it was the Chinese junk of the Ming dynasty which was spanning the Indian Ocean in the famous voyages of Cheng Ho.

This vigorous assertion of Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean area was probably an important force behind the rise of Malacca, which must be seen as a landmark for the century. Arun Das Gupta argues compellingly for the significance of the Chinese factor in explaining the rise and fall of southeast Asian cities and maritime states. The Chinese however withdrew from the western routes in the 1430s while Malacca continued to be the meeting place of Chinese, Indian and Malay trades. The vigour of Malacca in the east, of Hormuz in the west and of Cambay and Calicut on the west coast of India characterize the fifteenth century in the Indian Ocean. There was no deep penetration of the interior anywhere except in Gujarat behind Cambay. It was not the continental state which upheld these port-cities; these were more the creation of the Indian Ocean. This is one recognizable pattern of the ocean which was replaced at other times by the rise of inland states and linking of sea routes and land routes.

In the navigation of the sea the Arabs were probably losing in the west because of pressures developing in Mamluk Egypt while the withdrawal of the Chinese left an important vacuum in the east. The Gujaratis appear to have been the major beneficiaries of the emptiness thus created. The fifteenth century certainly saw an important expansion of Gujarati commerce which was matched in the east by the rise of Javanese shipping and trade in the Indonesian archipelago. There is some obscurity about the Bay of Bengal but shipping from Coromandel and Bengal remained important at the time.

It is possible to argue that the real alteration in the Indian Ocean during the sixteenth century was brought about not so much by the arrival of the Portuguese as by the rise of continental monarchies in the western Indian Ocean. The Mughal empire in India, the Safavid empire in Persia and Ottoman empire in Iraq, Syria and Egypt were responsible for deepening the penetration of the interior and strengthening the Islamic force, particularly the pilgrimage of the *hajj*. The Portuguese, after the first violent overture, settled within the structure and were, in a way, swallowed by it.

In the second decade of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman empire under Selim I, also known as Selim the Grim (1512-1520) underwent important changes. Internally the empire undertook a policy of suppressing Shi'ism which made a clash with the Shi'i Safavids of Persia inevitable. This conflict had in fact already begun, but it was under Selim I that the Ottomans crushed Shah Ismail at the famous battle of Chaldiran in 1514 and established themselves as the most powerful Islamic empire and defender of Sunni orthodoxy. Immediately after, Selim turned upon the Mamluks of Syria and Egypt, and routed the Mamluk army in 1516 at Marj Dabiq to the north of Aleppo. This led to the Ottoman occupation of Aleppo and Damascus. Cairo fell to them in 1517 and the rule of the Mamluks was at an end. Selim assumed the title of Caliph and the guardianship of the holy places in Hejaj. Locally much remained of the Mamluk aristocratic society but the Ottoman empire, now international,

orthodox and legitimate, was acknowledged by the Venetians who sued for and obtained fresh trading rights. This was to endure throughout the period we review.

The advance into Iraq was resumed under Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566) and Baghdad was wrested from the Safavids in 1534. Basra at the head of the Gulf was left with an autonomous Arab chief for a time but was eventually taken over in 1547. The Arab society on the ground, specially along the route from Basra to Baghdad, remained real and effective as the Mamluks were in Egypt but the overarching sovereignty went to the Ottomans. Aden, at the mouth of the Red Sea, was taken in 1538. The Ottoman empire thus touched the Indian Ocean in the Persian Gulf and controlled the entry to the Red Sea.

Much of this advance was brought about by the struggle with Persia and the Mamluks, but the Portuguese were also a factor, as was indeed seen in the decision to take over Basra. During the sixteenth century the struggle in the Persian Gulf remained one between the Ottomans and the Portuguese. The Safavids under Shah Ismail (1501-1524) and then Shah Tahmasp (1524-1576) did concentrate on what became the Iranian homeland, but at the time Safavid impact upon the Gulf was limited. The Portuguese dominated the entrance to the Gulf by their control of Hormuz and Muscat; they also controlled several other important points up the Gulf, including for some time Bahrain, by virtue of their hold on the thalassocracy of Hormuz. The Safavid province of Lar, surrounding Hormuz, was ruled in fact by an independent governor and the mainland power failed to control the maritime belt. Along the Persian Gulf the Persian factor remained important, especially in the mercantile communities. Arab tribes had migrated all along the coast, mainly from Oman, but we should not think in terms of any clear division between Persian and the Arab. As Claude Cahen puts it: 'There is little doubt...that the Iranian themselves formed the majority of the merchants, both on land and in the Indian Ocean from Malaysia (and sometimes as far as China) to east Africa. A whole history of Persian expansion needs to be worked out. In the realm of commerce, Sindbad the sailor was a symbol, popularized in Arabic, but the vocabulary of business and of navigation (outside the Mediterranean) was, even in Arabic, deeply imbued with Persian'.*

The Portuguese controlled much of the Gulf by controlling Hormuz and dependencies, the Arab strongholds strung along the Gulf. There was no direct Persian political control but the Persian factor remained significant. The sixteenth century however saw a strong assertion of the Turkish element in the Persian Gulf, in the Red Sea and repeatedly in the western Indian Ocean. The Mamluks had already reacted strongly to the

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* Claude Cahen 'Tribes, Cities and Social Organization', R.N. Frye (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. IV (Cambridge, 1975), p.327.

Portuguese invasion of the Indian Ocean. Sultan Qansuh al-Ghuri appointed the Kurdish admiral Husain to govern Jiddah in 1505, and Jiddah was developed as a naval base against the Portuguese. Husain won a naval encounter against the Portuguese off Chaul, in 1508, but lost decisively the next year. Suez was developed as a naval base by Selim I and it was from Suez that the Ottoman viceroy Khadim Sulaiman Pasha sailed against the Portuguese in 1538, without much success, other than taking Aden from the Arabs. The celebrated Turkish navigator and cartographer Piri Reis recaptured Aden from an Arab chief in 1547. In 1551, he was successful in taking Muscat but failed to capture Hormuz. Piri Reis was succeeded by Sidi Ali Reis who in attempting to sail the Turkish fleet left by Piri Reis at Basra, back to Suez was driven by the winds to the coast of Gujarat and lived for a time at Ahmedabad to compile a comprehensive handbook of the Indian Ocean.

The struggle between the Turks and the Portuguese continued sporadically in the western Indian Ocean even as late as the 1580's as Pearson notes in his contribution on the sixteenth century. But this conflict died out in the subsequent years as the Turks weakened in the Red Sea and the Portuguese declined.

The Turkish conquest of Yemen including the famous Rasulid port of Aden in the early sixteenth century was another notable development. Yemen, divided between the coastal area with its maritime Arab population, the agriculturists of the interior and the Bedouins, had never been an easy country to unite. The Sunni Ottomans encountered the Shi'i Imams of the Zaidi sect and had to contend with several revolts in course of the century. The Turkish administration appears to have let Aden decay and concentrated on Mocha, a port somewhat inside the Red Sea. The development of the coffee trade which happened along with the Turkish control of Yemen was the reason of Yemen's prosperity and a fact of importance for the Indian Ocean merchant.

The utility of coffee in keeping the religious awake during night vigils is said to have been discovered by Shaikh Ali ibn Umar, a Shadhili darvish, who died in Mocha in 1418. Muslim theologians and important rulers, including Suleiman I, disapproved of it, but the popularity of the drink spread fast. Mocha, which the Ottomans were nursing as a naval base, became a principal mart for the commodity grown in Yemen's interior. Caravans from Aleppo, the second city of the Ottoman empire in the sixteenth century, and Cairo journeying to the *hajj* brought large consignments of silver for the purchase of coffee. Indian merchants took advantage of this trade to push the sale of their textiles. As Indian trade towards southeast Asia was to some extent dislocated due to the Portuguese, the connection with the Red Sea became ever more important. These sea-lanes remained open, and became importantly Gujarati because of the developing coffee trade and also because of the decline of the Cairo-based merchants.

A minor development, as far as the Indian Ocean is concerned, was the isolation of Abyssinia brought about by the Turkish annexation of the ports of Zeila and Massawa in the 1550's. It prevented a possible alliance between the Abyssinians and the Portuguese but the Abyssinian emperor Galawdewos (1540-1559) defeated all attempts by Muslim forces to conquer the Christian state. On the opposite side of the Red Sea, Hejaj became a part of the Ottoman empire and the Sharif Barakat II sent his son Abu Numaiy to pay homage to Selim I at Cairo. Barakat was confirmed in the lordship of the Holy Cities but the *khutba* henceforth was read in the name of the Ottoman sultan and caliph. The Sharifian clan squabbled among themselves fairly continuously but were treated with respect by most rulers and had some kind of monopoly rights in the trade between Jiddah and Cairo. Gujarati merchants, operating from Surat, were prevented from participating in this trade as late as the turn of the eighteenth century.

The Turks and the Portuguese struggled in the western Indian Ocean during much of the sixteenth century while the Arabs of the Hadramaut coast worked out their own salvation by supporting or opposing them as circumstances indicated. The Kathiri sultans of Shihr were the dominating power in the area and their principal port was the most important rendezvous for the India trade and the connections to east Africa, second only to Aden. They also controlled Makalla and Zufar, the latter supplying principally horses to India. The Mahri sultans were based at Qishn and were in conflict with the Kathiris, but we do not yet know much of this dynasty. The Kathiris appear to have accepted Ottoman sovereignty and paid tribute.

As M.N. Pearson explains in his chapter on the sixteenth century, the continuities were more important in the history of the Indian Ocean than the discontinuities which resulted from the Portuguese impact. One major development of the fifteenth century, the expansion of Gujarati trade and shipping, would seem to have continued unabated at the time, once the first disruptions were past. On the other side of the ocean, as Arun Das Gupta points out, Javanese trade and shippping continued growing, although the Portuguese conquest of Malacca meant a rearrangement of the trading networks. In maritime India the port of Cambay yielded place to the Mughal port of Surat which in its turn helped in the consolidation of Gujarati trade. In southeast Asia the rise of ports like Acheh in Sumatra, Bantam in Java and Macassar in Celebes provided focal points for the dispersed but vigorous Asian commerce.

We know far less about the trade of the Bay of Bengal, but it is useful to remember the important if secondary role of the ports of Burma. Bassein and Pegu were the major Burmese ports for much of the sixteenth century. Towards the close of the century, Syriam, lower down the Pegu river, grew as the port of the Burmese capital, while Pegu itself became less accessible due to silting. Towards the south of this Irrawaddy cluster, Martaban and Moulmein faced each other across a narrow divide, while Tavoy, Mergui and Tenasserim were ports further south, on which Siam had an eye. To the north, Akyab and Mrohaung were ports of Arakan, which controlled the great port of Chittagong as well.

The Burmese royal line known as the Toungoo dynasty, under its two able rulers Tabinshwehti (1531-1550) and Bayinnaung (1551-1581), conquered the Irrawaddy delta inhabited by the seafaring Mons and built up Pegu as Burma's capital. This was Burma's only effective outlet to the sea, as Arakan during the sixteenth century successfully withstood an assault even from the great Tabinshwehti. This concentration upon the maritime area was due in a large measure to the Toungoo dynasty's unwise desire to conquer Siam. Several campaigns undertaken by Tabinshwehti and Bayinnaaung produced no permanent results. On the contrary the Thai counter-offensive under King Naresuen in the 1590's when Pegu was ruled by Nandabayin, a weak successor to Bayinnaung, proved disastrous to Burma in general, and the maritime ports of the Irrawaddy delta in particular.

Pegu was destroyed in the wars at the end of the sixteenth century and an important part in its destruction was taken by the kingdom of Arakan. The port of Chittagong had been seized by the Arakanese in 1459 from the weak ruler Barbek Shah of Bengal. In the 1530's, Portuguese freebooters had begun settling at the port and establishing their power under the patronage of the kings of Arakan. Chittagong under the kings of Arakan was a considerable centre of trade but much the more favourite activities of the Portuguese were slave raiding and piracy mainly in riverine Bengal. Philip de Brito, a mercenary captain of king Min Razagri of Arakan (1593-1612) assisted Arakan in overthrowing Nandabayin of the Toungoo dynasty in 1599-1600 and then proceeded to establish an independent principality based upon the port of Syriam. King Naresuen of Siam annexed southern Burma upto and including the port of Martaban. The Irrawaddy delta, with the exception of De Brito's Syriam was left in ruins.

To the furthest east, the Ming dynasty's voyages in the early fifteenth century have been discussed by more than one of our contributors. The energetic Indian Ocean policy was abandoned by the 1430's and Chinese shipping concentrated upon the port of Malacca. With the fall of Malacca in 1511 the trade of the Chinese appears to have dispersed just as Indian shipping did among several ports like Bantam, Grise and Acheh. In the middle of the sixteenth century the south China coast was convulsed by raids of the Wako pirates who were nominally Japanese but normally Chinese, including substantial merchants and coastal officials. The piratical raids were real enough but an important part of it was an attempt by Chinese merchants to challenge embargoes on overseas trade.

Ningpo, the principal port of Chekiang, was burnt by the pirates in 1523.

Nanking itself was beseiged in 1555. Chiaochou, one of the Amoy ports of Fukien, was sacked the same year. The Ming response to the growing menace was only occasionally effective, and with the years the navy and the coastal defences were in fact neglected. Merchants and mariners of China's three maritime provinces, Chekiang (principal port, Ningpo), Fukien (the Amoy ports) and Kwangtung (Canton), paid small heed to the imperial prohibitions and continued their voyages to southeast Asian ports as well as the Philippines. Besides Acheh and the Javanese ports, Patani became an important centre for the Chinese junks. The coastal gentry often encouraged the mariners in their defiance, although the lucrative trade to Japan was given up.

The Portuguese established themselves at Macao, near Canton, in 1554 and arranged their most profitable trade to Japan after they were allowed to settle at Nagasaki in 1571. In that same year, the Spaniard Legazpi had captured Manila and Spanish silver began to reach China mainly via Macao and the Portuguese. The Portuguese also built new lines of trade from north to south, reaching the Moluccas from Macao. In the later sixteenth century, as Arun Das Gupta points out, there was a remarkable expansion in unofficial Portuguese trade in the eastern Indian Ocean which helped the Javanese and the Gujaratis to recoup their fortunes. Portuguese attempts to monopolize the spice trade does not appear to have frightened off many. But they were mainly instrumental in a substantial import of silver into China and for the fact that the Spanish dollar became the current coin from Chekiang to southern Kwangtung.

The sixteenth century therefore saw the Indian Ocean in different moods. The Turks established themselves at the western end. The Safavids in Iran were slow to make their presence felt but the Mughals in India were dominating all of northern India by the end of the century. This combination began to shape matters in the western and middle Indian Ocean, while in the east the Mings were already in their long decline. The Portuguese official trade was an insignificant part of this oceanic trading but the unofficial merchant built up the Portuguese presence. The Arab mariner was on the retreat and the Chinese restricted, while the Gujarati merchant and the Javanese shipper continued to prosper.

The major tendency in the seventeenth century was to consolidate the deeper penetration of the continent by trade which had begun in the previous hundred years. The three great Islamic empires, the Ottoman, the Safavid and Mughal, continued to assure reasonable protection to the trader and built up the internal network of commerce. There was a more effective linking of the land routes with the sea-lanes in the western and the middle Indian Ocean. The decline of the famed spice trade did not represent as great a setback for Asian maritime commerce as used to be supposed, and as Professor Arasaratnam argues in his survey of the seventeenth century, the marked expansion of Indian maritime commerce during the period summed up much of the developments in the Indian Ocean.

The Turkish factor which had surged into prominence in the western Indian Ocean during the sixteenth century went into a permanent eclipse. The only energetic Ottoman ruler during the seventeenth century, Murad IV (1623-1640) saw to it that Baghdad was protected against Safavid onslaught, while Basra defended itself with the help of an improbable ally, the Portuguese. The Ottoman hold over the head of the Persian Gulf was thus not seriously disturbed. In Egypt, the autonomy of the Mamluks continued to increase and the Ottomans contended themselves with the annual tribute which waned as the century wore on. But the empire took what care it could of the great pilgrim routes and a reflection of that concern was seen in the fact that Ridwan Bey (d.1656), the most powerful man in early seventeenth century Egypt, held the position of the *amir-al-hajj*. The same was true of Ottoman Syria, where the *walis* of Damascus in the later seventeenth ceutury were the *amirs* for the *hajj* and often took personal command of the caravans to protect the pilgrims against the growing anarchy of the routes. Turkish merchants continued to take prominent part in the trade of the western Indian Ocean, although the frequent appearances of the Turkish navy ceased altogether. But Indian states like Bijapur and Golconda habitually appealed to the Ottoman sultan for redress against European piracy. The Ottoman empire was however in its long decline and the occasional attempts at consolidation, although apparent in Europe, produced no impression in the Indian Ocean.

Yemen freed itself from Ottoman rule in the 1630's. The struggle for independence had, in fact, begun in the 1590's under the great Zaidi Imam Al Mansur, but it was under his successor, Imam Al Mueiyad, that the Turks recognized the inevitable and withdrew from Yemen in 1635-36. The fanatic Shia sect of the Zaidis now ruled at Sana. They tended Mocha as the major port which continued to be the most important port of call for Indian Ocean shipping. The trade in coffee continued to flourish in the face of prohibitions, including those imposed by Murad IV. Indian ships had already built up a major concentration at Mocha. In the early seventeenth century they were joined by the English and the Dutch. The trade in the upper reaches of the Red Sea, however, was denied to Europeans and Indians alike. The Hasanid family, sharifs of Mecca, had half the customs at Jiddah given them by the Turks and insisted as before upon a monopoly of the commerce to Suez which they would only share with Egyptain Mamluks. Hejaj was still part of the Ottoman empire although the Hasanids gave them little peace.

The character of the Ottoman decline in the seventeenth century was such that the ports for the shipping of the Indian Ocean continued to function and the land routes connecting these ports to distant markets continued to enjoy some protection. In the Persian Gulf, the Safavids under Shah Abbas the Great (1588-1629) for the first time brought much of maritime Iran under their control. The defeat of the Portuguese by the Persians and the English, leading to the destruction of Hormuz in 1622, has been much discussed. It is true that it did not lead at once to the elimination of the Portuguese from the Gulf and they repaid the compliment by defending Ottoman Basra against Safavid attacks in the 1630s. But gradually Bandar Abbas, which replaced Hormuz, became the principal port of the Persian Gulf and the Safavids built splendid roads with caravan-serais which integrated the Iranian homeland with its port on the Indian Ocean.

Persian merchants like Turkish merchants are known to have taken an important part in the trade of the western Indian Ocean, although it is difficult to say how much of the shipping and sailing fell to them. The Arabs who had been in relative decline throughout the sixteenth century came back in the later seventeenth century as an important factor in the Indian Ocean mainly through the rise of the Ibadite Imams, the Yarubi dynasty, of Oman. At the time when the Zaidi Imams of Yemen were freeing themselves from Ottoman control, the Ibadite Imam Nasir ibn Murshid of the Yarubi tribe challenged the Portuguese control of coastal Oman. But is was his successor Sultan ibn Saif who captured Muscat from the Portuguese and began a hundred years war between the Muscat Arabs and the Portuguese in the western Indian Ocean. The great difference between the Arab revival in Yemen and that in Oman was the Omani navy which repeatedly challenged the Portuguese on the Indian coasts and attacked them with great success in eastern Africa. This navy was the only non-European force of its kind in the Arabian Sea after the disappearance of the Turkish fleet. It was built partly by capturing Portuguese and other ships but mainly by having ships built at Surat. Unfortunately for the Indian Ocean merchant the Omani ships were definitely piratical towards the close of the reign of Sultan ibn Saif (d.1679). M.D.D. Newitt explains the decline of east African trade due to the impact of the Omani conquests, culminating in the fall of Portuguese Mombasa in 1698.

Such negative developments were uncharacteristic of the seventeenth century in the Indian Ocean. During this time there was general prosperity in trade all round the ocean and it was this prosperity which showed itself at the principal Indian ports like Surat, Masulipatnam and Hooghly. Merchants of Surat, in particular, built their matchless commercial fleet which in the later seventeenth century comprised well over one hundred sea-going vessels. This 'fleet of Hindustan' as it was known at ports like Mocha, was deployed mainly in the western Indian Ocean but kept up contacts with southeast Asia as well. The emergence of the three Islamic empires in the middle and western ocean in the earlier period had seen the development of a strong trade to the Red Sea. This trade was maintained and further developed, while the control of coastal Iran by the Safavids and the destruction of Portuguese Hormuz appear to have liberated commerce in the Persian Gulf.

The English and the Dutch, although at times a piratical force in these waters, were duly respectful of the landpower of the continental monarchies because, unlike the Portuguese, they traded deep into the interior. In the eastern Indian Ocean, the merchants of Coromandel, especially those of Masulipatnam, kept up a western connection, while strengthening their trade to the southeast. At that time Indian ships went to Acheh, Bantam, Macassar and the Thai ports of Mergui and Patani. The fact that the Dutch gradually established a monopoly in the spice trade meant a rearrangement of the Indian networks in the Malay-Indonesian world and a concentration on alternative commodities like pepper in Sumatra or tin in Malaya. The liberation of Bengali trade by the effective Mughal conquest of riverine Bengal also helped strengthen this shipping to southeast Asia.

The decline and fall of the maritime state of Arakan must have contributed powerfully to this liberation of Bengali commerce. Contemporary Bengali literature is strewn with echoes of the dread produced in southern Bengal by the Maghs of Arakan and their allies the Portuguese freebooters. This alliance however was far from being smooth. We have seen that the Portuguese captain Philip de Brito set himself up as an independent ruler at Syriam in 1600. Min Razagri, king of Arakan, attempted unsuccessfully to dislodge him from that stronghold. Razagri feared, with reason, that de Brito would use Dianga, the Portuguese base off Chittagong, to overthrow the Arakan monarchy. He therefore attacked Dianga and drove the Portuguese out of it in 1607.

The Portuguese regrouped as an out and out pirate force in the island of Sandwip in the estuary of the Meghna under 'king' Sebastian Gonzales Tibao, an erstwhile salt trader. Mughal expansion into the eastern coastal tracts of Noakhali, which was perceived as a great danger by both Tibao and Razagri, might have produced an alliance but Tibao preferred traitorously to capture the Arakan fleet rather than help Arakan in fighting the Mughal. The Sandwip Portuguese then raided upto the very walls of Mrohaung. King Minkhamaung (1612-22), Razagri's successor, withstood a joint attack from Tibao and an official Portuguese fleet from Goa in 1615 and two years later succeeded in wiping out the pirate base at Sandwip. The Portuguese freebooters could no longer act as an independent pirate force and made their terms with Arakan. Slave raiding in southeastern Bengal now became the favoured occupation of the Maghs and the Portuguese. Mughal suspicion of an interdependence between Portuguese Hooghly and the pirate port of Chittagong led to the expulsion of the Portuguese from Hooghly in 1632. Shaista Khan, the Mughal governor of Bengal, completed the process by capturing Chittagong in 1666. The

Arakan fleet was destroyed and the kingdom went into irreversible decline.

Further down the Burmese coast, there was a promise of revival in the delta of the Irrawaddy in the early seventeenth century. It will be recalled that the wars at the end of the sixteenth century had destroyed Pegu and undermined the dynasty of Tabinshwehti and Nandabayin. Philip de Brito had captured Syriam and expelled its Arakani governor. An attempt by Arakan to retake Syriam had failed in the early 1600's. The Portuguese viceroy at Goa befriended De Brito, gave him a daughter in marriage and assisted him with warships. But De Brito failed to conciliate the sea-faring Mons of Pegu over whom he ruled and it was with Mon assistance that king Anaukpetlan (1605-1629) of the restored Toungoo dynasty overthrew De Brito in 1613 and had him executed. The Portuguese challenge in the eastern Indian Ocean, even in its semi-official form, was now finally over.

Anaukpetlan, like his two illustrious predecessors concentrated on Pegu and worked to revive the Mon-Burmese kingdom which had been their objective. This dream was given up by his successor king Thalun (1629-48) who abandoned Pegu and returned to inland Ava. Foreign trade was no longer encouraged and shipping at Syriam, the port which had succeeded Pegu, given up for silting, became wholly foreign and probably Indian for the most part. These Indian shippers were being benignly protected by Thalun in the 1640's as the Dutch learnt when they attempted to enforce a monopoly. But the dynasty was not interested in the expansion of trade. This also the Dutch discovered when they were not allowed to profit from an increasing Chinese trade via Bhamo and were obliged to withdraw altogether from Burma in 1679.

The promise that was belied in Burma appears to have been fulfilled in Siam. We saw how the Thai king Naresuen took advantage of the failing Toungoo dynasty to take over the Indian Ocean ports along the isthmus. Thai policy continued to be much more favourable to maritime commerce than was its Burmese counterpart. King Songtham (1611-28) and king Prasart Thong (1630-55) elaborated a structure of royal trade which had begun as early as the late fifteenth century. Kings of Siam were monopoly merchants in rice, sapan wood, tin, saltpetre and lead. They also took considerable interest in ship building and the freight trade. King Narai (1656-88) made skilful use of the Manchu permission for limited tribute trade to expand Siam's trade with China. The Japanese had traded directly with the Thai ports in the early seventeenth century, but with the closure of Japan in the 1640's, Siam entrusted her trade to the Chinese. This meant that merchants and mariners, mainly from Fukien, took over the management of Thai maritime trade in the east, while Indians came in sizeable numbers to Mergui, Tenasserim and Patani. Thailand therefore helped keep Chinese trade alive at a time of difficulty for maritime China and acted as a bridge between India and China throughout the seventeenth century. The story of European adventurers in Thailand has often been told, and the attempt by the French in the later seventeenth century to take power in Siam is well known. But the significance of the Thai ports for the Indian Ocean lay in the connections they formed between the China Sea and the network to the west.

This mingling of the Indian Ocean with the China Sea did not happen in the ports of Cambodia and Vietnam (Tonkin and Annam). Much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw continuous civil conflict in the area while the trading network, supplying, say, the much coveted raw silk from Tonkin, was dominated completely by the Chinese and the Japanese. The trade of Portuguese Macao and later the trade of the Dutch Company at these ports do not seem to have amounted to much.

In Malaya and Indonesia, maritime trade in the seventeenth century brought a number of ports into prominence. Acheh and Bantam, Macassar and Jambi took over much of the trade which previously had been concentrated at Malacca. The Dutch capture of that Portuguese stronghold and the gradual control they established over the trade in spices rearranged the trading network in the archipelago. The establishment of Batavia in 1619, was an event of great importance and that city drew to itself a considerable amount of Chinese trade. The Chinese and the Indians continued to mingle in the trade of the archipelago at ports like Bantam and Jambi, but Javanese trade declined and Java's shipping was destroyed with the destruction of the *pasisir* ports in the early seventeenth century by Mataram. The disappearance of the Javanese from the trade of the archipelago in the face of growing Dutch intervention and attacks from their own interior forms the single most important negative factor in the history of the period which is otherwise one of general prosperity and growth. The Dutch control of eastern Indonesia can be seen as a corollary to this, although they were unable to assert effective control till they had eliminated Macassar in the 1660's and Bantam twenty years later. The decline of Acheh in the later seventeenth century freed them from any challenges from that quarter. Indian trade in the eastern waters during the later years of the century tended to concentrate more and more on Malayan ports like Johor, Kedah and Perak.

Beyond this zone of intermingling, China was progressing from the decline of the Ming dynasty to the establishment of their successors, the Ching or the Manchus. Maritime China offered a difficult challenge for the Chings because important support for the fallen dynasty came from Fukien and its neighbouring areas. Between the 1620's and the 1680's, the well-known Cheng family upheld the Ming cause. Cheng Chi-lung (Iquan) and his son Cheng Cheng-kung (Coxinga) controlled much of the shipping in the China Sea in the middle seventeenth century. The mightiest gesture of Cheng Cheng-kung against the Chings was the burning of Nanking in 1659. Driven back upon Taiwan shortly afterwards, the Cheng family ousted the Dutch and confronted the Manchus who prohibited all maritime trade. Admiral Shih Lang eventually conquered Taiwan for the Ching dynasty and the prohibitions were lifted. In the meantime the encouragement given to Fukinese junks by Batavia, the aggressive commercial policy of the Thai monarchy and the undying spirit of the Chinese mariner and merchant kept the maritime network of China intact in southeast Asia. The junk trade improved considerably in the later seventeenth century when China was ruled by Kang Hai, the greatest of the Ching emperors.

The disruptions caused by the collapse of the Ming dynasty had also meant an eclipse of the trade of Manila. This was further reinforced by the Dutch effort to divert all Chinese junk trade to Dutch ports and the closing of Japan. But in the later seventeenth century with the return of peace to maritime China, the picture changed. There was however the difference that English private trade and Indian merchants, now trading to Manila from as far off as Madras and Surat, pushed the sale of textiles which became second only to Chinese silk and porcelain at Manila for the galleons setting out for Mexico.

The English and Dutch contribution to the generally prosperous trade of the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century was to reinforce this expanding commerce. It is true that at times and in certain areas they were no more than pirate forces, as for example off the Red Sea and in the Chinese waters during the early years. It is also true that the draconic policy followed by Jan Peitersz Coen in the conquest of Banda and Amboina was anything but mercantile. But the overall effect of the arrival of the north Europeans in the Indian Ocean was to bolster up the oceanic networks, strengthen its carrying capacity and add a sharp competition. They were however working within the indigenous structure and except the few pockets in Indonesia claimed by the Dutch, they were everywhere one more strand in the weave of the ocean's trade.

The most important change during the eighteenth century was the growing importance of the European factor in the Indian Ocean and the eventual sundering of the organic unity of trade and shipping towards the close of the period. It was not merely the establishment of European empires in India and Indonesia, but a general drifting apart of the Asian and European which characterized the eighteenth century. The controversy over whether there was a decline of the trade of the ocean may indeed be unsettled at present, but the division of the ocean between European and native at the end of our period can hardly be doubted. It seems possible also to suggest that the ties of dependence which grew in the Indian hinterland contributed powerfully to this dissolution of the fellowship.

At the same time the deeper penetration of the continent by maritime trade which had characterized the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries tended to disappear, leaving oceanic networks served by narrower hinterlands reminiscent of earlier times. This transformation was mainly brought about by the simultaneous downfall of the Safavid empire in Iran and the Mughal empire in India, while the Ottomans lost control over much of their outlying provinces. The trading networks were rearranged as a result and on the whole maritime commerce turned more and more towards the east of the Indian Ocean.

The decline of the Ottoman empire is best known in its European context from the bitter peace of Karlowitz against Austria in 1699 to the disaster enshrined as the treaty of Kutchuk Kainardzi with Russia in 1774. The pressure upon the empire in Europe prevented it from taking any advantage of the downfall of Iran and saw it lose what control it had in Egypt. Mamluk misrule in Egypt brought about a considerable economic decline in the area, while Syria fared little better. The picture was only a little less grim in Iraq, where Basra enjoyed spells of relative prosperity while merchants looked for a safe haven as the Safavid dispensation collapsed. But the Turkish factor had definitely lost all its importance in the Indian Ocean.

The civil war in Yemen, which erupted seriously in 1714, was an important factor in disrupting the trade of the Red Sea, specially for the Indian merchant. The Gujaratis were already under considerable pressure at home and the Yemeni civil war produced demands upon them for high and unjust taxes at a time when the trade could hardly support such exactions. Indian trade and shipping to the Red Sea which had been so prominent at the turn of the eighteenth century, dwindled to insignificance by the middle of the century. English private trade was relatively less affected because it was more capable of dealing with political pressure but that commerce also turned away from the area in the 1760's. The Dutch had successfully introduced the cultivation of coffee in Java which became its main source of supply for the commodity in the 1730's. As the Dutch Company de-emphasized its trade in the western Indian Ocean, and Surat went into eclipse, the strong presence of the Netherlands in these waters also disappeared in the later eighteenth century.

In the Persian Gulf, of course, the collapse of the Safavid dynasty in the early eighteenth century undermined the consolidation of the trading network achieved earlier. From the later seventeenth century the dynasty was in a state of creeping paralysis which showed itself in the disruption of land communication. The Gulf itself was in a turmoil caused mainly by the attacks of the Omani Arabs in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The Afghan victory at the Battle of Gulnabad (1722) which overthrew the dynasty only confirmed trends apparent for decades earlier. It meant the decline of Bandar Abbas, which had been the centre of the seventeenth century prosperity. Trade in the Gulf now sought shelter further up the Gulf at Bushire and Basra, but, as in the Red Sea, commerce in these waters was insignificant compared to what it had been in the later years of the seventeenth century.

To some extent this debacle in the northwest of the Indian Ocean was

retrieved by the return of the Arabs to prominence. We have noted how the Yarubi dynasty of Oman challenged the Portuguese in the western Indian Ocean in the early seventeenth century and how by the later years of the century the Yarubi navy had degenerated into something of a pirate force. It was this naval force which was creating havoc in the Persian Gulf in the early years of the eighteenth century. The Yarubi dynasty declined because of the civil war which began in 1719; they were succeeded by the Al Bu Said's in the 1740's. The Al Bu Said rulers restored the commercial role of the Omanis and Oman's authority in eastern Africa with Zanzibar as their African capital. At the end of the century they were in control of Bandar Abbas and a considerable amount of the trade of the western Indian Ocean. The ships of Muscat were making voyages to the southeast as well.

A similar resurgence of the Arab factor can be traced within the Gulf by the rise of the Utubs of Kuwait and Bahrain. This maritime Arab tribe consolidated the trade of the upper Gulf from around 1716 based at Kuwait, and in the 1780's at Bahrain. Persian attempts under Nadir Shah (d.1747) and Karim Khan Zand (d.1779) to challenge this Arab dominance were unsuccessful. Ports of Hadramaut also contributed to this picture of Arab strength in the Indian Ocean. At the close of the eighteenth century ships of the Hadrami coast were voyaging regularly to Indian and Indonesian ports.

The vacuum which the Arabs were in part filling had been created by the decline of the matchless Gujarati fleet based at Surat. Conditions for this decline were created by the undermining of the Mughal empire, and compounded by the simultaneous breakdown of the Safavids and the weakening of the Ottomans. The civil wars in Yemen and the growing piracy in the Persian Gulf were deterrents against which the Gujaratis could not put up an effective resistance when their home base was being eroded. The decline of Indian shipping had already occurred in the eastern Indian Ocean as the fleet based at Hooghly owned mainly by Mughal officials was withdrawn in the later seventeenth century, and the ships of Masulipatnam disappeared after the Mughal conquest of Golconda in the 1680's. The fact that Indian ships were very much less in evidence in the eighteenth century changed the character of the Indian Ocean.

The character of the ocean was further changed by the growth of English private commerce. As P.J. Marshall explains this growth had really begun in the later seventeenth century but in that phase had been very much a part of the Asian trading complex, supported by Asian money, carrying Asian freight and catering to Asian markets. English shipping based at Madras was at its peak in the years 1660 to 1730. The Calcutta fleet made rapid strides between 1715 and 1740. Indian shipping, gravely weakened at the time from other causes, could not measure up to this new challenge. Calcutta-based shipping in particular did much better in the western Indian

Ocean during these years than did the Gujaratis. The Gujaratis were unable to penetrate the market in Bengal. Then in the mid-eighteenth century there was a hiatus, and English private trade picked up once more only in the 1760s. By that time the Calcutta fleet was abandoning the western markets more and more to Arabs and Indians, and turning their own trade towards the east, mainly to China. Madras, after the hiatus, joined the quest for tea, as did Bombay, in the later years of the eighteenth century. The volume of this shipping, now directed towards the southeast and east of the ocean was larger than anything previously seen in these sea-lanes, but it carried a trade which was restricted far more among the Europeans than ever before, and it was nursed by a hinterland which had been rearranged. Collaboration between Asians and Europeans of course remained a fact of life and the arrangements described by Bruce Watson did not disappear all of a sudden but the earlier unity within the structure was broken.

In the Malay-Indonesian world this change was seen in something of a division between Java, Sumatra and the eastern islands on the one hand, which under a tightening political control of the Dutch grew impoverished, while the areas now known mainly as Malaysia, though politically fragmented, saw a considerable quest for profit by virtue of the new trade sweeping its shores as it went towards China. The most important indigenous development of the times was the dispersal of the Bugis from southern Celebes in the later seventeenth century. All over the area but specially in Riau-Johor which replaced Malacca, the Bugis demonstrated their skill in trade and war. Partly due to impoverishment and partly caused by the impact of the new trade and the dispersal of the Bugis, piracy spread rapidly in the Malay world and an impression grew of a breakdown which recent historians have questioned.

The decline however was an undoubted fact for the Dutch East India Company which, as Om Prakash explains, had been one of the important forces in the seventeenth century expansion of trade in the Indian Ocean. The private trade of the English proved a vital support for the English Company as it expanded its activities in the eastern waters while the Dutch who had never allowed this liberty to the servants of the Company only knew them as corrupt men, damaging the Company's concerns as they built their own fortunes. The earlier conceptions of ruling the trade of the ocean by holding its sea-lanes were abandoned as the Dutch concentrated on the territorial control of Java during the eighteenth century. Their Company withdrew from the western ocean and lost control of the arteries which were pumping trade now to China from India via the Java Sea. Dutch shipping and navigation fell behind the improvements so steadily introduced by Englishmen. The Dutch were obliged to discontinue their trade to Japan and they failed to see the significance of tea.

The altered character of the Indian Ocean was seen, albeit without any conscious recognition, by the American shipping which began to arrive in these waters from the 1780s. They never knew the importance of the Indian shipowner in the trade of the Indian Ocean. By the time they arrived the day of the great Chinese junks was over. The Ching dynasty allowed free play of Chinese navigation from 1727 for about forty years and then went back to earlier prohibitions. Canton grew as the only legitimate centre of foreign trade, the home of the comprador. Chinese migrating to Thai cities and Malay plantations still met and mingled with resident Indians, now mainly from the Coromandel coast. But the twin trading streams from India and China no longer converged along the Java Sea or the Straits of Malacca. Ships of the Indian Ocean were now 'European' and the rest were 'native craft'. They looked different and soon European scholars were writing about the curiosities enshrined in native boat building, explaining the survival of the primitive. No one remembered that not many decades ago it was difficult to say on sight whether a ship on the Indian Ocean was European or Asian. This did not mean that some Arabs, mainly from Muscat and the Hadramaut coast did not invest in European type ships nor that Indians settled in Calcutta or Bombay would not on occasion own a few of such vessels. But the native craft, smaller and suppler, went now into roadsteads which the European ship could not enter and the high roads of the Indian Ocean were left more and more to owners who came from other seas.

Bibliographical Note

As this part of the Introduction aims at bringing together the major trends of the discussion in the collection, supplementing only slightly in areas not fully stressed, references for further reading are for the most part to be found at the end of the different essays. Relevant chapters in T. Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib (eds.), *Cambridge Economic History of India,* vol. I, 1200–1750 (Cambridge, 1982) and Dharma Kumar (ed.), *Cambridge Economic History of India,* vol. II, c. 1757–1970 (Cambridge, 1983) now provide a useful introduction to our theme. The most notable recent addition covering the field generally is K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean, An Economic History From the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, 1985). Recent additions on Indian topics include Dwijendra Tripathi (ed.) *Business Communities of India* (Manohar, New Delhi, 1984) and J. S Grewal and Indu Banga (eds.), *Studies in Urban History* (Amritsar, n.d.).

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3

The Indian Ocean in the Fifteenth Century

Genevieve Bouchon and Denys Lombard

Is there not a precedent for commencing a volume such as this with a foreword on the fifteenth century? The question can certainly be asked, since the category, which comes from the chronological divisions seems to proceed naturally from a reverse reasoning, which after having put : 'the Anglo-French conflict for the eighteenth century', 'the VOC for the seventeenth century' and 'the Portuguese for the sixteenth century', would stop short and put the question: but before that? And, moreover, why not go further and put the same question for the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries? Obviously the sources of information relating to these earlier centuries are far less rich and abundant than they are for more recent times. Serious studies of the ancient Arab, Indian or Nusantarian (Indonesian) voyages are still too few and inaccurate to enable a real synthesis.

We shall try to present in this discussion a picture of the Indian Ocean trade prior to the arrival of the first Portuguese fleets. In order to do this we shall make use of the records of these Portuguese pioneers. However, this should not mislead the reader by giving him the impression that these shores were waiting to be discovered before life there could become active and harmonious. This idea of 'discovery', essentially one-sided, but nevertheless embedded in our minds, often prevents us from grasping the importance of any earlier movements. In the broad context with which we are concerned here, there was in fact a prodigious movement taking place, a movement which in no way waited until the beginning of the fifteenth century to show itself—and into which we can gain an insight by reading the extraordinary voyages of Ibn Battuta, the fourteenth century Moroccan, who travelled extensively in India and ventured as far as China, following wherever he went, and without difficulty, the many branches of the Muslim network. It is the structure of this network which we will try to reconstitute here. This does not mean that we shall always be dealing with 'ancient history', since each day events demonstrate that the network was

able to maintain strong roots from one end of the ocean to the other, roots which five centuries of European presence have failed to wipe out.

Sources

Considering the wide area they cover, the sources available on the fifteenth century are few and have been used in very diverse ways. Although the Indian Ocean countries are rich in archeological and epigraphic remains, many aspects of their synthesis have yet to be undertaken. Identified by manuscripts which are too often apocryphal, the chroniclers attached to the royal dynasties showed little interest in maritime activities. The archives contain few traces of the sea merchant communities, whereas Egypt and the Arabian peninsula hold valuable collections—Fatwa literature, fiscal documents, family trees. These sources have already provided information which, although accurate, is difficult to interconnect. Thus, we must resort to the accounts of foreign travellers to give life to the major winds of change of which the Indian Ocean was the stage.

Although written earlier Ibn Battuta's account serves as the basis of our study. The quality of his observations makes his work the first record which is not shrouded in legends which typify the texts of preceding centuries. His account is structured around his travels, from the Red Sea to the China Sea. This general picture was later confirmed by the detailed observations of the fifteenth century travellers, who showed a great concern for accuracy, but they are too dispersed, in time and place, to allow the development of the societies and markets to be followed. However, the more numerous and fuller accounts of the Italian and Portuguese travellers at the end of the century enable an overall picture to be pieced together.

Of the great number of travellers who came from Persia, Abdur-Razzaq Samargandi gives the most complete account. It was written while on a mission assigned to him by Shah Rokh. Leaving Hormuz in 1437, he visited Dabhol, Calicut and Honavar (Onore). In 1469, the Russian trader Afanasij Nikitin also left Hormuz. He stayed in the East until the beginning of 1472, passing through Muscat, Cambay, Chaul and Dabhol. He also gave descriptions of other maritime cities without specifying whether he actually visited them.

The Chinese have left us some essential sources which have enabled us to follow the rise of commercial activity in the 'southern seas' (*nan-yang*) and to complete, often with greater precision, what the Arab sources tell us. The *Lingwai daida* (twelfth century), the *Zhufan zhi* (thirteenth century) and the *Daoyi zhilue* (fourteenth century) reflect the progressive development of the Chinese maritime commerce under the Sungs, then the Yuans. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, the number of sources increased in proportion to the great expeditions undertaken by Admiral Zheng He (Cheng Ho), not only to the great ports of Insulindia (the Malay-Indonesian world) but also to Sri Lanka, India, Mecca and the

African coast. The most famous of these sources, the *Yingyai Shenglan* was translated into English by J. V. Mills, who also studied ancient charts, thus enabling the itineraries of the Chinese junks to be reconstructed. Moreover, Chinese historians have recently published passages of the *shilu* (or 'veracious memoirs') which tell of the southeast Asian countries under the Mings (1368-1644) and form a not insignificant collection of documents which hitherto has been little used.

Compared with this sizeable collection, the truly vernacular documents are much less informative. The fifteenth century was a period of transition for the great Indianized kingdoms of Angkor, Majapahit which were giving way to states of a new kind. Epigraphic sources, which often give indications of an economic nature become rarer and are replaced by literary sources which, like the Javanese *kidung*, only give an indirect insight into the rise of the great trading activities. The *Nagarakertagama* is still the best source of information on Java, but it dates from 1365. The *Undang-undang Malaka*, a code written in Malay in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, gives us a good idea of what the new port society was like.

The Italian traders have frequented the Indian ports since ancient times, and it seems that they never forgot the way there. From the thirteenth century, their voyages are evidenced by texts. In the first third of the fifteenth century, Nicolo de' Conti, who came from Venice, travelled across Malabar, and the Bay of Bengal to Sumatra. Converted to Islam by convenience, he was to do penance on his return by dictating the account of his voyage (1439). Between 1495 and 1496, the Genoese Girolamo da Santo Stefano, retraced the steps of a route which led him from Malabar to Pegu, Sumatra and the Maldives. At the same time, a more mysterious traveller, Ludovico di Vartehma, began a long peregrination in Asia, from the Red Sea to Insulindia, but his account will have to be subjected to a thorough scrutiny.

Enlightened by the instructions of their Arab guide, Ibn Majid, the Portuguese were to be the last witnesses of a world which their own activities were soon to lead into decline. By their systematic explorations they were able to take over all the principal economic and social structures of the Indian Ocean countries. The logbooks, the letters from the Lisbon traders and the accounts of Duarte Barbosa and Tome Pires were tardy evidence of this, yet their fullness enables a comparative study to be made with the previous sources.

Political Situation

The Indian Ocean coastline did not give the appearance of a maritime front of continental states, but rather of a group of fairly autonomous ports. This was because, either the ports and their territory formed independent kingdoms (Hormuz, Kilwa, Malacca), or the merchant communities there

had complete freedom in the oceanic trade (India-Malay world). Due to natural obstacles and the poor state of the land routes, these maritime cities often had closer links with each other than with the centres of power in the states of which they formed a part.

Most of the areas on the western ocean appeared to be in a politically confused state, a situation which was sometimes controlled by some powerful dynasty. Nearly all the small emirates of the coast and the African islands traced their origin to Persian and Arabic leaders, although the rivalry among the latter meant that none was able to dominate for long. Subjected to a state of holy war—*jihad*—imposed on it by its neighbours, the Abyssinian kingdom tried in vain to gain an access to the sea, which it had achieved at great cost at Massawa and Sawakin, two ports which would be retaken by the Mamluks. Further south, the Adhalids of Kilwa had succeeded for a time in exerting their authority on the neighbouring ports and islands, particularly during the reign of Sulaiman al-Adil (c. 1421-1442). However, the disorder which followed his death had allowed most of the surrounding towns to become independent, for example, Sofala, the city of gold.

The Egyptian Mamluks controlled the Red Sea lands to the north, and from 1425 had succeeded in imposing their presence in Hejaj, traditionally governed by the sharifs of Mecca. The dominance of the Mamluks was in evidence on both shores of the Red Sea, where frequent political trouble had caused them to intervene. The southern end of the peninsula was under the influence of the Rasulid sultans who controlled the tribal chiefs who were garrisoned in the citadels along the coastal strip of the Yemen and Hadramaut. By the end of the century, the Tahirids had succeeded in replacing the Rasulids in the Aden region, whereas the Kathiris of Zufar had taken control in al-Shihr and the eastern part of the country.

Iran was governed by the descendants of Timur Lang. His grandson, Shah Rokh, attempted to extend his influence overseas, particularly in Hejaj, where he was confronted with the hostility of the Mamluks. Towards the middle of the century, the Timurids were beaten by the Turkmene princes, the 'black sheep' then the 'white sheep'. This dynastic rivalry had little effect on the independent kingdom of Hormuz, which from the small island of Jarun extended its control over much of the coast, from the eastern end of Oman to the islands of the Persian Gulf, up to Bahrain and Kharg. After 1507 its own palace revolutions were to favour Portuguese intervention.

On the Indian subcontinent, the fifteenth century was marked by the consequences of the expansionist policy of the Delhi sultans during the preceding century. On the Indo-Gangetic plain, Timur's invasion in 1398 left the Delhi throne in the hands of princes of fortune until the coming of the Lodi sultans in 1450 who reorganized the administrative structure and extended their kingdom to the gates of Bengal.

Freed from the tutelage of Delhi in 1338, Bengal was to keep its independence until the end of the sixteenth century. Despite the presence of a large Hindu majority, power remained with Islamic princes of various origin. In 1493, having put an end to the bloody reign of the Abyssinian sultans, Ala-ud-din Husain Shah began a reign of peace during which trade was allowed to prosper and civilization blossom.

In 1401, Gujarat was liberated of the same allegiance. After initial disturbances, the kingdom became more organized, particularly under Mahmud Bigarha (1495-1511) who gained the submission of Kathiawar and most of the Rajput principalities, and gave a new lift to the economy.

In the Indian peninsula, the raids of the Tuglug armies had provoked a renewal of the Hindu movement which crystallized around the Raya of Vijayanagar, who grouped under his protection most of the lords of Mysore, Telinga, and Coromandel. At the same time, the princes of Deccan converted and conquered by the Tuglug sultans had rejected the tutelage of Delhi while remaining faithful to Islam. In the face of the emerging power of Vijayanagar, they had grouped around Zafar Khan, the founder of the Bahmani empire. The parallel growth of these two powers significantly changed the political map of the peninsula. In the fifteenth century, their antagonism provoked constant wars. Limited to the frontier regions, the latter did not in any way prevent a brilliant civilization from developing here and there. Around the 1490's, the Bahmani empire broke up into five sultanates : Berar, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Golconda. Vijayanagar, despite its dynastic difficulties, had a significant influence on nearly all the southern lands. In Sri Lanka after the reunifying reign of Parakramabahu (1421–c.1467), the island broke into three kingdoms around Jaffna, Kandy and Kotte, upon which the port of Colombo depended.

Although political events had little effect on maritime life, they did have considerable repercussions on the activity of the ports and the movement of certain merchant communities. It should also be noted that, although the political power was not totally Islamic, the maritime power was almost entirely in the hands of Muslim communities.

In the Far East, the great event was without doubt the retreat of the Mongols, characterized, in China, by the coming to power of the new Ming dynasty in 1368. This was the result of a national reaction against the northern ascendancy and a systematic wish, under the reign of emperor Yung-lo (1403-1424), to develop a maritime policy and to intensify the relations with all the countries of the southern seas. After 1450, with the renewed Mongol danger, the scheme was officially abandoned, but private trading continued. In Japan, where the fifteenth century corresponded to the so-called Muromachi period (1392-1490), the power of the Ashikaga Shoguns was upset by domestic wars, although the great southern clans grew rich from the maritime trade with China and the Ryukyus.

On the Indo-China peninsula, there was major unrest. To the east, the Vietnamese were resisting the Chinese, in a movement directed by Le Loi who founded a new dynasty in 1428, and advanced southwards at the expense of the Chams, whose capital Vijaya was taken in 1471. In the centre another force was also being established — that of the Siamese of Ayuthia, who, in the north fought the wars against Chiengurai, and in the southeast, their Cambodian neighbours whom they forced into a defensive position : the great capital of Angkor was finally abandoned in 1431. To the west, the Shans of Ava, heirs to the ancient kingdom of Pagan, were fighting the Mons of Pegu. This was a period of many wars but also of trade, Pegu, Ayuthia, Fai-fo were important ports of call on the China route, culture and political construction (code of king Trailok in Siam and of Le Thanh-Tong in Vietnam).

In the archipelago, things were changing. With the arrival of Islam a new 'model', that of the sultanate, was introduced, which replaced the old 'Indianized kingdoms'. The fifteenth century corresponds almost exactly to the period during which the renowned Malacca emporium was formed and rose to power. It was founded by a Hindu prince, although his successor was converted to Islam, and sought inspiration from the example of Samudra-Pasai, a port on the northern coast of Sumatra, whose prince had been Muslim since the thirteenth century. Further south, the great Javanese empire of Majapahit was still powerful, and was to remain so until 1525, but its hold on external agencies slowly began to wane. In the *pasisir* ports on the northern coast of Java, power passed into the hands of Muslim merchants, who traded with Champa and the Moluccas.

Economy

The economy of the Indian Ocean was based on the exchange of goods from equatorial countries, very rich in vegetable matter, and those from the subtropical and Mediterranean countries, less rich in natural products but industrially more developed.

Production

Spices have been the main source of wealth in the Indian Ocean countries for they grow naturally along its shores. The two principal spice-growing zones are : Malabar and Insulindia.

Pepper grows on the western slopes of the Ghats, but it was also cultivated in the gardens along the coast. Ginger was picked in the Calicut and Eli regions. Once produced, pepper and ginger were bartered for rice by the traders who transported them to Calicut and the ports of Malabar. Cinnamon, which was plentiful in Sri Lanka, was taken to Colombo each year to be exchanged for rice, coral and mercury. Hollower and less hot than that the pepper of Malabar, the pepper of Sumatra was much appreciated by the Chinese buyer. Cloves were found in the Moluccas and nutmeg in the Banda island : their disposal was ensured by the Javanese who bartered them for rice, cooking pots and low quality cottons, and then transported them to Malacca.

Rice was distributed from three major producing areas : Vijayanagar which from its western and eastern ports, supplied the Indian peninsula, Sri Lanka and the Persian Gulf; Bengal and Pegu, which from Sonargaon and Martaban supplied western Indo-China, Sumatra, Sri Lanka and the Maldives; Java, which supplied the archipelago and Malacca. Malacca also received rice from Pegu for its domestic consumption. In eastern Africa, a smaller zone of production existed in the region around Kilwa which exported to Aden. Sugar was produced in Vijayanagar and Bengal, where some of it was used to make conserves. The Maldive islanders produced most of the dried fish needed by the sailors. Salt was exported from Hormuz.

Medicinal and aromatic plants abounded in tropical flora. Limited to local usage, betel and areca-nut, were found along the sea-shore. Cultivated in Egypt throughout the Thebes region, opium was exported from Aden to the whole of the East in large quantities, most frequently through Gujarat which also produced an opium of lower quality. Other plants were also sought after by the western world for their therapeutic qualities : tamarind and myrobolan from Malabar, aloe from Socotra, camphor from Sumatra, rhubarb from China, the latter being transported via Hormuz. The demand for perfume was considerable. Arabian incense and rose water from the Middle East were stored in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf ports, whereas gum benzoin and musk were distributed from the ports of western Indo-China. White sandalwood, which had many uses, was loaded at Timor, the red sandal being reserved for building.

Animals not only provided aromatic products (musk, ambergris), they were also of use in their own right. Used throughout tropical Asia as domestic animals, elephants were specially trained for war in Sri Lanka, then exported by the Malabar traders to the whole of India. The African elephants mainly produced ivory which the Arab merchants collected in the ports along the eastern coast of Africa, together with exotic animal skins. In the fifteenth century, the conflicts of Vijayanagar and the Bahmani empire created a considerable demand for Arabian and Persian horses, particularly as the climate of these countries was not suitable for the rearing of horse. There are some indications that the horses were exchanged for rice in Hormuz from where they were shipped to Dabhol, Chaul, Goa and Kayal. They were then taken by road to the princely courts where they were resold for gold.

The importance attached to the building up of treasure, as much by the princes as by the traders, made the mining of stone and precious metals extremely significant. Pearls from the Gulfs of Mannar and Persia were sought after more than those of Kayal, and rubies from the kingdom of Ava more than those of Sri Lanka. Diamonds were quarried in Vijayanagar and Berar. Sri Lanka poured into the Calicut market sapphires and emeralds, zircons and tigers' eyes. More common stones, cornelians and agates were found in Gujarat. The gold of east Africa and Sumatra and the silver of Siam were not minted.

Besides cotton and indigo, other natural products were used to make crafted goods: Sumatra tar, Pegu lac, Bengal and Honavar salt petre, and the coir of Maldives, whose rot-proof roping was used on all the fleets.

Slave trading was widespread, but little is known about how it operated. According to the travellers, east African countries and the Maldives supplied the largest number of slaves. The eunuch slaves from the Balkans and Bengal occasionally held important positions in the army and administration.

The manufactured goods were principally made in the Middle East and on the Indian subcontinent. The majority of these—jewels, arms, gilded leather, carpets—were made by local artisans. On the other hand, textile production was already foreshadowing the industrial era. Apart from China, which produced floral silks and damasks, Persia also produced silk goods. In Bengal, silk was mostly embroidered and interwoven with cotton threads. The fifteenth and sixteenth century writers spoke highly of the muslins from the Sonargaon region which was exported to Europe. Bengal, like eastern Vijayanagar, produced large quantities of cotton fabric, but it appears that its distribution overseas did not equal that of Gujarat.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese were assessing the size of Gujarat's expansion, which had doubtless been organized during the preceding century. A very elaborate system of production enabled Gujarat to impose itself on all the markets of Indian Ocean by responding to the demands for material from the whole oceanic region. Based on cotton growing and the preparation of indigo, the textile industry occupied most of the villages depending on the techniques particular to each one. The large towns accommodated the factories. Natural, white or indigo coloured cotton, printed or worked fabric, were loaded in great quantity at all the ports of Cambay, accompanied by crafted goods of a varied nature : gean-beads, hard stone jewels, trinkets made of wood, ivory and shells, arms and perfumes. These manufactured goods were widely distributed to all the markets in exchange for the most valuable goods : gold, spices and precious stones.

Commerce

The foreign trade of the Indian Ocean is generally known as the 'spice trade', a name which does in fact cover a variety of goods. Although known to be at its peak in the fifteenth century, the sources on this period are insufficient to fully understand its infinite complexity. However, the sources available do reveal certain changes. In this discussion we shall deal with the spice and porcelain traffic in order to throw light on certain essential characteristics.

The spice-importing ports — Aden, Jiddah, Hormuz — were situated at the outlets of the land routes along which products from the Middle East and the Mediterranean were conveyed by caravan : ducats from Venice, ashrafis from Egypt, copper, lead, mercury and vermilion, coral, alum and saffron, arms and mirrors. Each year in August, driven by the southeast monsoon winds, the ships set sail from the western oceanic ports towards India. Some came to Calicut, where pepper was exchanged for coined gold, ginger for copper and Malaccan spices for western goods. These ships returned to their home ports during the first months of the following year. Other traders undertook longer and more remunerative journeys. Instead of going to Malabar, they made for the Gujarati ports where they negotiated some of their cargo in exchange for textiles. What was left, they loaded onto Gujarati boats and sailed with them to Malacca where they exchanged the entire shipments for Insulindian spices and goods from the Far East.

Other ships left Gujarat for the pepper growing areas of Sumatra where they exchanged cotton for pepper. They then sailed up the Bay of Bengal to the ports of Pegu where they bartered the pepper, rose water and opium for rubies, benzoin and lac.These ships returned to the western ocean with the northeast monsoon, by two separate routes. Some sailed to Sri Lanka, offloading the Insulindian spices in the Malabar ports before reaching Gujarat; others took the direct route through the atolls of the Maldives. They then sailed to the ports of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf where caravans carrying spices from Jiddah and Hormuz to the Mediterranean ports were waiting for them. But the quantities which passed this way could not be compared with what was consumed in Asia. Ibn Battuta, like Albuquerque after him, observed that the amount reaching the west was a small part of a considerable traffic.

To this brief sketch of the western oceanic traffic the maritime routes of the South China Sea should also be linked — one via the east, the other via the west — along which the Chinese reached Malacca and the pepper ports of Sumatra and Malabar. It should be noted that during the course of the fifteenth century, the Chinese increasingly cut back on their voyages until in the end they ventured no further than Malacca, where they found all that they required.

The Indian peninsula divided the ocean into two zones, characterized by two different types of trade. In the western ocean pepper, ginger and cinnamon were exchanged for rice, as well as gold and metals in the distributing ports. In the eastern ocean pepper, clove and nutmeg were exchanged for rice and manufactured goods (porcelain, arms and textiles) in the markets of Malacca and the archipelago. As a result the spice trade became inseparable from the rice and textile trades. Another important export from the Far East, Chinese ceramics, was distributed to southeast Asia, as well as to the countries lying to the west of the Indian Ocean and as far as the coast of Africa and Madagascar. Chinese ceramic can be compared with Indian cotton in that they are manufactured goods made in a country technically more advanced and despatched to the equatorial regions to be exchanged for raw materials from the forest regions. The trade was an ancient one, and pieces from the Han period have been found in Sumatra. But it expanded considerably under the Sungs and the Yuans/Mongols (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), and underwent a significant upturn under the Mings. What is remarkable is that not only were the products exported, but also the craftsmen. And we have evidence of a whole regional production developing, for example, in Siam, at Sawankhalok, where in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries workers from China were making cups and bowls which can be found all over Insulindia, and particularly in Celebes. Recent research, based mainly on the study of shipwrecks found in the Gulf of Siam and on the findings of the excavations carried out in Kilwa, aim to put in a broader perspective the importance of this 'exported' ceramic which has been neglected for too long.

The Maritime Cities

Aden and the Southern Arabian Ports

Situated at the outlet of the sea and land routes leading to the western ocean, Aden holds a privileged position. It controls at one and the same time the gates of the Red Sea and the coasts of Yemen, Hadramaut and al-Sawahil, the name given by the Arabs to the eastern coast of Africa. Aden lay within a zone whose winds pushed the ships towards India each summer. These sea routes were completed, on the land side, by a network of roads and caravan tracks which, passing through Aden, converged on Mecca and beyond. A link existed between Aden and Gaza, connecting the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean.

Built on the site of an extinct volcano, Aden had, at one time been an island, connected to the mainland by an isthmus which became covered at high tide. A gap in the mountain gave access to the inland routes. Bristling with towers and bastions, a wall enclosed the tall stone houses, the mosques and the water reservoirs. Since ancient times, constant immigration had renewed a cosmopolitan population. Due to the Islamization of Asia, Aden not only attracted traders, but also Muslim pilgrims on their way to the holy towns.

Practically all the spices destined for Maghreb and Europe passed through customs in Aden. They were transported to Jiddah which could only be reached along narrow channels. It was here that the exchange of Oriental and European goods took place. The profits made by the customs at Jiddah were thus bitterly disputed between the sharifs of Hejaj and the Mamluk agents. Transhipped onto smaller boats which were capable of steering through the reefs of the Red Sea, the spices were transported to Suez where they awaited the caravans going to Alexandria and the ports of the Levant. On the east coast, the Aden traffic was closely linked to that of the Erythrean and Somalian ports — Aydhab and Sawakin, Dahlak, Zeila and Berbera — which traded food, ivory and slaves from Ethiopia. To the east, Aden had links with the ports of Yemen and Hadramaut. Lying adjacent to the coastal mountain range, they exported incense and myrrh which the Bedouins brought down from the mountains, together with horses which were even finer than those from Hormuz; the latter were bought for gold by the Indian sovereigns. Of these ports, al-Shihr and Zufar had traded since antiquity with the Asiatic traders.

Kilwa and the Ports of East Africa

The maritime fringe of the African continent had been converted to Islam by Arab and Persian immigrants who had founded small theocratic states, island realms or small enclaves adjacent to the still impenetrable continent.

Probably founded by Persians — the Shirazis — in the early middle ages, Kilwa was, in the fifteenth century, the most important of these cities. Established on a coral island separated from the coast by a channel, it offered a sheltered port, close to an easily accessible beach, and a hinterland rich in rice, citrus fruits and cattle. The flat-roofed stone houses with carved wooden doors, were made with coral-blocks. They were set out at random, separated one from the other by narrow lanes and fresh water canals. All around lay mud-and-wattle dwellings. There was no rampart, but a palace-fortress open onto the sea.

The town had about 4,000 Arabic and Swahili speaking inhabitants, nearly all Muslims. Some of the Indian residents were financiers, money-lenders or goldsmiths, since Kilwa had the monopoly of Sofala gold, on which it based its trade. It also exported ivory and slaves on which the sultan raised a duty. It was here that the Arab and Persian merchants met the Cambay traders who sold their cotton and silk, glass-beads and porcelains from China of which significant remains have been discovered.

From Mogadishu to Zanzibar and Madagascar most of the ports on the African coast had similar characteristics : an Indo-Arabic culture on an African background; a trade based on ivory, slaves and food; the presence throughout of Gujarati traders. During the fifteenth century numerous conflicts set these small states against each other, thereby contributing to the growth of Mombasa, rival of Malindi and Kilwa, which seemed to be in complete decline when the Portuguese arrived.

Hormuz and the Persian Gulf

A metropolis in a small state living from the oceanic trade, Hormuz was at the crossroads of Iranian, Arab and Indian encounter. Being in possession of land all along the Persian territory, it was connected to the towns of the plateau through which silk and central Asian market routes passed. Founded at the beginning of the fourteenth century on the island of Jarun, it had spread its influence to the islands of the Persian and east Oman Gulfs. According to Persian custom, the name of Hormuz was applied both to the kingdom and its capital.

The richness of the town was a contrast to the aridness of the surrounding area. Having no fresh water of its own, Hormuz depended entirely on the barges which brought water from Qishm and Mugistan. Situated to the north of Jarun, the port offered the ships two excellent harbours, to east and west. The royal castle was the only fortification of the city. The one storey houses, with ventilation chimneys perched on their roofs, were packed along the narrow lanes which were traversed by two streets. To the south was a group of huts made of reeds and palm leaves. The non-Muslim places of worship were situated outside the town. In the town Arabs, Persians, Jews, Christians and even Indians lived together. A rare phenomenon in the Indian Ocean, foreigners were not grouped together by nationality. Arabic was spoken as much as Persian around the markets which were open at night because of the torrid heat.

The nearby islands had small satellite ports : Qishm, with its agricultural land which supplied food and water : ancient Qays with its fishing grounds and pearls; at the end of the Gulf, Kharg, famous for the skill of its pilots, and finally Bahrain, surrounded by its fields and palm groves. The maritime cities of eastern Oman were also under the control of Hormuz; Sohar and Khurfakka, where horses embarked for India, Qalhat, the second town of the kingdom, gradually yielded its place to Muscat with its famous harbour. These ports often traded directly with Aden and the maritime cities of western India.

Nevertheless, the Hormuz customs brought together all the produce from the islands and nearby mainland; cereals and dried fruits, dyes, alum, silks, carpets, pearls and horses. But these goods were not sufficient to balance the trade, so strong was the demand for Indian merchandise. To obtain the rice, sugar, iron, Chinese porcelain and Insulindian spices, transported by the traders from Deccan and Gujarat, silver laris also had to be paid, as well as Jarun salt with which the holds of the ships returning from the Persian Gulf were ballasted.

The Indian Ports

The Indian peninsula held a privileged position at the northern centre of the Ocean. Practically all the 'spice route' trade revolved around it. The fact that the traders were unable to reach Canton and Malacca in one single monsoon made the west coast of India an indispensable stopover where favourable winds were awaited. More often than not, there was no need to go further, since the sea traders of Gujarat and Malabar undertook the task of transporting and depositing in their ports products from China, Insulindia and Sri Lanka.

The ports of Gujarat were grouped at the mouths of the Mahi, the Tapi and Narmada, around Cambay, still the largest of them, albeit inaccessible at low tide. Despite the currents and shallow waters, which made the approach to it treacherous, the town had such prestige that it gave its name to the whole region. Its houses of bleached stone, with their monumental doors and carved windows, formed an open city which Nicolo de Conti estimated to be twelve miles in circumference. The foreign traders were not only attracted by the immense emporium, but also by the elegance of the city life and the refinement of its customs.

The Cambay market, where all the products of the known world were found, was stimulated by the activity of the surrounding ports : Broach, the ancient Barygaza; Gogha, at the entrance of the Gulf, Surat and Rander, situated opposite one another on the two banks of the Tapi. The Hindu businessmen of Surat had their ships built in Rander. In 1509, the Portuguese found Surat under the influence of the Brahmin Malik Gopi who had enriched the town considerably; it can therefore be presumed that his work had begun towards the end of the preceding century. The fortune of Surat was on a par with that of Rander, whose houses, adorned with Chinese porcelain displayed in their windows, was evidence of the more specific relations with the Far East and southeast Asia. All the maritime cities were protected by the Diu fortress whose ramparts stood on an island on the south coast of Kathiawar. Under pressure from the governor Malik Ayaz, its garrison was reinforced at the end of the fifteenth century. Armed with a cannon and two small guns, about a hundred *atalayas* guarded the coastline. Diu's commercial activity turned more towards the Middle East, where its ships exchanged goods from western Deccan for goods from Hormuz, the Red Sea and the coast of the African horn.

Situated at the very source of pepper production, the ports of Malabar had been frequented since ancient times. The flooding of the Periyar in 1341 brought mud to ancient Cranganore, and the progression of the offshore bar closed the port of Eli. Cochin, Cannanore, and especially Calicut, gained in importance as a result of this. Calicut superseded the great port of Kollam. The Chinese clientele who had made Kollam rich in such a short time now turned to Calicut.

Calicut was however built on an inhospitable shore, since it was to the neighbouring ports of Pantalayini-Kollam and Kappatt that the junks and sambuks took refuge during the monsoon or came together to set sail after being loaded. In Calicut, shops and warehouses lined the beach. Covered with *olas* (Malayalam: palm-leaf thatch), the stone houses stood in spacious gardens where the pepper plants surrounded the trees. Large wooden carved doors stood at the entrances to these houses. Overlooked by a temple covered with copper plates, the town had several mosques and numerous tanks.

In Calicut the foreign trading communities *(pardesi)* could be observed in all their diversity. They not only came from Arabia and Persia but also from Syria, Egypt, Maghreb, Sumatra, Pegu and China. Some stayed there each year from mid-August to January, others settled there. But it seems that the rise of Malacca and the maritime expansion of Gujarat brought about a significant change in the fifteenth century. Having no further need to travel beyond the Malay peninsula, the Chinese abandoned Calicut; the town traders became associated more and more with the trade offered by the Gujaratis who established agents and large warehouses in the town.

All who visited Calicut at this time marvelled at the integrity of its traders and the organization of its trade. With the arrival of each ship, the goods were listed and valued, then guarded day and night by customs agents. This feature is all the more remarkable since very active pirate communities lay in ambush at a number of points along the western coast. The security of its waters and the efficiency of its businessmen contributed to making Calicut the most frequented port in the whole area.

The activity of the other ports on the western coast placed more emphasis on the distribution of food and local goods. They took little part in transoceanic trade, although they did import horses from Hormuz. For this reason Chaul, Dabhol, Honavar, Bhatkal and Goa were disputed by the Rayas of Vijayanagar and the Bahmani sultans.

The travellers have only left brief descriptions of the maritime cities of the Bay of Bengal, although they do give an idea of the extent and nature of their activities. All these towns were situated at the outlet of the rice producing countries, and ensured the provision of the surrounding regions. Close to the mouth of the Brahmaputra, Sonargaon — the great emporium of Bengal — exported amongst other things sugar and valuable fabric; on the east coast of Vijayanagar, Pulicat and Nagapatnam distributed the cotton fabrics of Coromandel; Kayal and Kalikarai, which belonged to the raja of Venad, traded horses and pearls; on the other side of the Gulf, Martaban, Dagon and Cosmin — the three ports of Pegu — exported lac and rubies, and Tenasserim, products from Siam. These economic activities helped the ports of the Bay of Bengal to build up cultural links between the shores of the subcontinent and western Indo-China.

The sources studied give us a picture of the features common to the maritime cities of India. The observation of Ashin Das Gupta* with respect to the Gujarati ports — one principal oceanic port reinforced by the activity of surrounding ports — also applies to the port groupings of Malabar or Coromandel, even though the major role passed periodically from one to the other (in the case of Eli and Cannanore, for example). Moreover, the topography of these cities conformed to the established social order : the fishers and sailors along the shore; in the town itself the traders from various nations grouped in districts; several miles away, the royal citadel clearly separated, although occasionally the sovereign had the use of a town residence. This situation emphasizes the practice of separating economic and political powers, one of the dominant features of the orgauization of medieval India.

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* Das Gupta, A., ***Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat*** (Weisbaden, 1979).

Malacca and the Ports of the Malay World

Instead of the agrarian kingdoms which had dominated until the fifteenth century and sought to consolidate, each in its own way, their overall power *(chakravartin)*, we now witness the development of several ports, kinds of city-states geared towards the great maritime trade and founded on radically different principles. The first example of this kind had appeared at the end of the thirteenth century in the north of Sumatra; Marco Polo had already pointed out the importance of Samudra-Pasai, and in the fourteenth century, Ibn Battuta stopped there on his way to China. In the fifteenth century, the sultanate of Samudra still possessed all its splendour and its ulemas had maintained their uncontested reputation; the first place, however, was seized by its neighbour, Malacca.

The zenith of Malacca, founded around 1400—at the time of the great expeditions of Zheng He (Cheng Ho)—and taken by the Portuguese in 1511, occurred exactly during the century studied here. From an archeological viewpoint, nothing much remains today of the great city made known to us largely through the first Portuguese sources. A river separated the hill on which the sultan's palace stood from the various commercial areas where each foreign community was installed under the authority of its leader, or *shahbandar* (Persian: king of the port, harbour master). According to Tome Pires, there were four such 'consuls': the first catered specifically for the Gujaratis, the second for the Kelings, Bengalis, Peguans and the people of Pasai, the third for the Javanese, and all those from the Malay country (Moluccas, Palembang, Banda, Lucon) and the fourth for the Chinese and the people of Champa and the Ryukus. Thus the population was extremely cosmopolitan, and it was said that eighty-four different languages were spoken in the town.

Malacca imported slaves and rice, the latter mainly from Java. From the Middle East came coral, copper, glass, opium, rose water; from India cottons of all types which were exchanged for precious woods, spices and silks. All the merchants from the west had to pay fairly heavy taxes, whereas others, from China and Insulindia had only to offer presents to the sultan's representatives. Transactions were settled in weights of gold and silver; ashrafis from Cambay and Hormuz as well as gold currency from Pasai were used. For smaller sums, tin coins which, from the middle of the century, the Malaccan sultans had minted. The sultan's administration sought to regularize trade and reap benefit from it for the treasury. The *bendahara* was responsible for financial matters, the *laksmana* for the fleet, the *tumenggung* for the police. The sultan controlled up to 1100 villages (*ducoes* or *dusun*) which supplied the town with fruits and refreshments, and the tin mines of the region provided the only notable product for export (Selangor, Klang, Perak etc.). Elephants, for use in combat, were taken from the nearby forest.

Further east, Malacca was connected with the ports of the archipelago, Tuban, Gresik (Java) and Ternate (Moluccas).

The Sea Traders

Although the economic activity of the Indian Ocean traders was particularly intense in the fifteenth century, there is still little known about how they organized themselves. Whether grouped in guilds, or acting independently, they covered a wide ethnic variety. These traders were dependent on political authorities to whom they paid taxes on their trading profits. Even though they frequently carried out the functions of *shahbandar* and *qazi* (Arabic: Muslim judge), the traders rarely achieved government post, and there was no merchant republic as there was in Europe at that time.

The Middle East Traders

The cosmopolitan society of sea traders was dominated by Arabs and Persians. Of the associations which dealt with the spice trade, the Karimis had developed to such an extent in Egypt during the Middle Ages that they had succeeded in conquering and absorbing nearly all the others. The Karimis dominated practically the entire trade between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. It was a family style society which sent its young to foreign ports to learn the art of trading. Even the slaves were employed as travelling agents. From Maghreb to China, the Karimis controlled both the caravan and maritime traffic. Dealing with the Venetians in the Mediterranean, they had created banking institutions. In spite of the fact that Muslim law does not authorize profits in excess of thirty per cent, they had accumulated immense fortunes which enabled them to act as the bankers and lenders of the sultans.

This extraordinary network of commercial activity ran into difficulty in the fifteenth century. In 1429, the Mamluk Sultan Barsbay assumed the monopoly on pepper, and transported it to Jiddah for his own use. He imposed a fixed price in the Alexandria market, disrupting business with Venice and the other Mediterranean cities. When the Karimis tried to find a way around this, Barsbay imposed his control on all their transactions. Some entered the sultan's service, others emigrated to Jiddah and India, with large numbers settling in Cambay and Calicut.

It is more difficult to understand the organization of the influential Persian traders commercial network. In Hormuz, the ruling class had interests in foreign trade and lived largely off customs profits, but the traders who were associated with them never attained posts in politics, even though they controlled the *bangsar* (Hindustani: bangsal, store-house custom-house in Hormuz). Powerful in the ports of Gujarat, Sumatra and Bengal, they were often appointed as dignitaries within the commercial society. The presence of laris (silver coins from Lar) in all the Indian Ocean markets is evidence of how the traders in this town were expanding.

Even more remarkable in the fifteenth century was the hold the Gilan traders had on the economy of the Bahmanid sultanates. Mahmud Gawan, a businessman, had risen to the rank of vazir of Bidar, which increased the trade between the Bahmani empire and the Persian Gulf. In Deccan, the horse trader, Halaf al-Hasa, also rose to the vazirate. Other horse traders established themselves in the ports of Vijayanagar, where they accumulated enormous profits, between 300 and 500 per cent. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the eunuch Nahuda Qaysar was leader of the Muslim community in Bhatkal.

The merchant society of the western ocean had many Jews whose long-established involvement in inter-Asiatic trade is confirmed by records. At the end of the century, the Egyptians and Levant Jews were joined by emigrants from Granada and central Europe. Having come to purchase fabric and precious stones, some European Christians, mostly Italians, entered the Indian Ocean via Hormuz or embarked on Egyptian ships.

The Indian Sea Traders

It is very difficult to recognize the various social groups which from the ancient and medieval period ensured the prosperity of the Indian peninsula. We do know that after a period of maritime expansion during the first centuries of our era, revival of Brahminical Hinduism discouraged the ruling castes from sailing the high seas. Consequently, the external trade of India was taken over largely by non-Hindu communities.

In Kerala, external trade was taken over by the Jewish and Christian merchant guilds established there since fifth century AD. The Jains in the coastal cities of Gujarat and Karnataka, and the Buddhist community of Nagapatnam took over the trade in those places. But during the same period Islam appeared in the Indian Ocean. From eastern Africa to Insulindia, Muslim colonies, scattered along the coasts, developed as a result of the trade which linked them. In India, the coastal communities, stimulated by the rise of the sultanates of Gujarat and Bengal, or encouraged by the conflicts of the southern kingdoms, succeeded in dominating most of the oceanic traffic during the fifteenth century.

The exact timing of the Gujarati predominance on the markets of the

Indian Ocean cannot be determined, but it seems that they had been established in certain islands of the Indonesian archipelago from the beginning of the fifteenth century, as is revealed from the Islamic tombs uncovered in Sumatra and the remains of the ships observed by Tome Pires in Gresik. At the end of the century, when the Portuguese broke out in the Indian Ocean, they were the first to describe what was, without doubt, the peak of the Gujarati expansion. At that time an important part of Gujarati society seemed to be participating in commercial activity.

The Muslims—generally Bohra or Khoja—left their country more willingly than the others. Traders, but also seamen, they manned their own ships or those owned by the country's noblemen. Their crews were among the most able sailors, the most experienced pilots, and their archers ensured the defence of the squadrons.

The presence of Gujarati Muslims in the ports of the Indian Ocean should not undermine the importance of the role played by the Hindus in external trade. In Cambay, nearly all the trading was under their control. Some of the Brahmins were not unwilling to equip ships and accumulate enormous fortunes.[1] Others, of lower rank, accompanied the goods convoys and took on the duties of messengers, as a result of the immunity granted to them by a statute which was even respected by the brigands. But most of the businessmen came from the Vaisya caste of Banias, experts in all trade dealings, particularly banking and textile and jewel trading. Established in all the ports of the Indian Ocean, and especially in Calicut, they were grouped around their temples in special districts. They had organized a network of active and interdependent correspondents responsible for the overall establishment of links between the producers and shipowners. It seems that the travellers often confused them with the Jains, who assumed the same roles and were, like them, of virtuous lifestyle.

Whatever their social group, the competence and skill of Gujarati businessmen amazed all those who met them. Masters of the textile market, present in all the ports along the 'spice route' coordinators of much of the traffic connecting the China Sea and the ports of the Red Sea, Gujarati businessmen had succeeded by the end of the fifteenth century in making Gujarat the greatest economic power of the Indian Ocean, and perhaps even of the Old World.

Having grown obscurely in the ports of Deccan during the middle ages, other Islamic communities—Ilappat of Coromandel, Navayat and Mappilla of the west coast—had supreme control over more specific trades. Their origin went back to the first days of Islam, when the practice of *muta*, or temporary marriage, enabled the Middle East sailors to find homes in all the ports they frequented. This custom was particularly common in Kerala, where foreign Muslims associated with women of low caste, the only ones who were allowed to marry them and prepare their food. The children born of these unions were brought up in the Sunni faith, were excused from observing 'distance pollution' and were allowed to mix with royal functionaries. Their experience of boats and ports equipped them for careers connected with the sea. Their knowledge of the language and habits of the country, the hospitality they accorded to their co-religionists meant they could act as agents and intermediaries. The Navayats of Canara had been in charge of horse trading until the massacre of 1427, perpetrated for an obscure reason by a Hindu raja who was a vassal of Vijayanagar. The survivors had regrouped in other ports, but were unable to recover their former wealth. The Mappillas of Malabar had succeeded in taking over some of the Navayats, their activities, and also in controlling the local spice market. The end of the fifteenth century marked the peak of their power, and the power of the Gujarati traders with whom they were frequently associated. In addition, the very important role played by the *pardesi*, or foreign Muslims, should be emphasized; they often held official posts in the administration of the maritime cities, particularly in Calicut.

As illustrated by the legend of Cheraman Perumal, the secular association concluded between the sovereigns of Kerala and the Mappillas rested on the principle of the mutual protection of their cults and their respect for the hierarchy of the castes. Thus, Hindus and Muslims were to abstain from eating beef and pork. The Mappillas practiced endogamy and observed the law of matrilineal succession, a custom in Malabar. The king guaranteed the Muslims freedom of cult, exonerated them from land taxes, and forbade anyone from entering their homes. The Mappillas had the right to practice their own legal system and to possess land overseas, as did the Ali Rajas of Cannanore who, in 1494, had extended their control to the Maldives. But on Indian soil, the economic power assumed by the Mappilla leaders was distinct from the political power of the king whose subjects they remained. It was during the fifteenth century that the Muslims finally succeeded in becoming superior to the Jewish and Christian communities who slowly lost their privileges in Cranganore and Kollam where their guilds had once been powerful.

The increasing influence of the Gujaratis on most of the Indian Ocean traffic should not conceal the importance of the traders from the Bay of Bengal who were to ensure the liaison between the ports of Indo-China and the Indian peninsula. The Bengali Muslims were present everywhere; on the north coast of Sumatra, in Pegu, where they held political positions, in Sri Lanka, and as far afield as the Maldives where they exchanged rice for cowries. The traders of Vijayanagar and particularly the Kelings of Telingana were powerful in Malacca, but were already being threatened by their Gujarati rivals. The Chettis of Coromandel had supreme control over money exchange, and the trading of pearls and precious stones. With the Brahmins they shared the privilege of being spared by warriors and brigands.

The Traders of the Malay world

The vernacular sources tell us scarcely anything of the Javanese traders. An episode of the Panji cycle, for example, recounts how the hero, having arrived in India, in the land of the Kelings, was fortunate enough to find a trader established in the country and acting as interpreter. The first personalities to become apparent to us are those whom the Portuguese encountered in Malacca at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The most powerful at that time was a certain Utimutiraja, who had authority in the Upeh area and to whom the Portuguese refer to as the richest man in the town–*o mais rico e poderoso da toda a Cidade*. He was the 'Consul' of the Javanese from Tuban, Japara, the Sunda country and Palembang, owned a large number of slaves and, through the houses belonging to his sons and sons-in-law and his sea crews, could command 'more than ten thousand people'.* Utimutiraja aged eighty at the time, seems to have considered using the Portuguese to rid himself of the sultan and take power. In any event, his indecisive approach finally cost him his life; accused of inciting an uprising amongst his compatriots, he was arrested and condemned to death. He was a man of such wealth that his wife then proposed a ransom of 100,000 cruzados.

The Chinese Traders

More important perhaps than the seven famous voyages of Zheng He (Cheng Ho), which confirm the significance of the Sino-Muslim network in the Indian Ocean—at the same time when Henry the Navigator of Portugal was sending expeditions to the west coast of Africa—was the slow reinforcement of the so-called 'overseas' Chinese communities, which, despite many attempts by the Europeans, were to continue maintaining the southeast Asian economies. From the thirteenth century, the traveller Zhou Da-guan (Chau-ju-kua) was pointing out their presence in Angkor, and around 1350 they took an active part in the founding of the town of Ayuthia which was to remain the great centre of Siam until the end of the eighteenth century. Ma Huan shows them to be numerous in the *pasisir* ports of Java at the beginning of the fifteenth century, and is quite categorical about their commitment to Islam. It is thought that the Islamization of the archipelago, which in Sumatra came about largely by way of India (Bengal and Gujarat), was conducted in Java by the Islamic communities of Fujian (Fukien), Canton and Champa. All the *pasisir* lords, which Pires tells us about, and the first *walis* or 'introducers of Islam', which the golden Javanese legend tells us about, do not seem to have participated greatly in this Sino-Islamic mercantile culture. 'The Chinese were trading in Java long before Malacca existed' says the *Suma*

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* Barros, *Da Asia*, II/6-3 & 7.

Oriental, which adds, 'It is said that the Javanese have had an affinity with the Chinese for a long time': *Dizem gue os Jaos ja tiuerom amtigamemte afenjdade com os Chijs.*

Further west, precious archeological documents recall these fifteenth century contacts: a bell offered by Emperor Yung-lo to the sultan of Pasai and a trilingual inscription (in Tamil, Persian and Chinese) left by Zheng He (Cheng Ho) in Sri Lanka. When the Portuguese arrived in India they found traces of the Chinese in Calicut. Samargandi speaks well of the *Cini bacagan* or 'sons of Chinamen' who during his time made up the crews of the town. However, this social group died out soon after, perhaps through integration with the Mappillas, and the Chinese communities in India today (notably in Calcutta) do not seem to have any link with it.

This brief panorama will have given an idea of the size of the network linking the Mediterranean and the China Sea, through a whole series of intermediary relay points, and of the variety of products passing in greater number from east to west than in the opposite direction. We have emphasized the activity of the Asiatic merchant communities, which, escaping the agrarian hierarchies and the growth of administration, developed a spirit of freer and more enterprising trading.

One of the more evident signs of the intensification of trade is the extension of the money economy. The use of foreign money, then the minting of local currency, was practiced in many places where hitherto only bartering had taken place. The beginning of the fifteenth century saw the appearance of the gold ashrafi of Egypt which was soon appreciated as much as the ducat of Venice. The sadis, and particularly silver laris of Persia became widely used. In Vijayanagar the pertabs mentioned by Abdur-Razzaq (probably the *pardaos* of the Portuguese texts) were minted. But India mainly drained foreign money. The gold and silver pieces came via the ports of Gujarat and Deccan. They were accumulated in India without ever flowing out. Further away Gujarati textiles were used as a basis for exchange.

The birth of the money economy is particularly remarkable in southeast Asia where, except in Vietnam and briefly with the Pyus of Burma, money had remained practically unknown. However, one could observe the premonetary signs, for example the cowries of the Maldives which were negotiated in the eastern Bay of Bengal and as far as southeast China. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, one can see on the one hand the Chinese traders beginning to export to the 'southern seas' quantities of sapeks of copper, and on the other hand the sultans of Pasai beginning to produce a gold coin, the mas. Around 1450 Malacca was minting copper money. During the fifteenth century Siam began to produce ticals of silver — small balls of stamped fixed weights — and around 1500, king Kan minted the first gold and silver money in Cambodia. It is easy to imagine the social consequences of such a phenomenon: the creation of movable fortunes, the development of a silver and usury trade (it was not by chance that slavery for debts developed in parallel) and, generally, the intensification of mobility and cosmopolitanism.

The great ideology which supports the whole movement across the immense ocean is Islam. Islam which in the west was declining with the fall of Granada in 1492, was marching on from success to success in the east. At this time the great Muslim communities began to establish themselves, which to this day continue to make their impact felt: the communities of Gujarat, Bengal, the eastern coast of Africa and Insulindia. Instead of turning in on themselves, in a cosmological and centripetal vision of space, these newly converted societies began gradually to open up to a more modern, geographic view of space, which was centred around a new pole: Mecca. Few pilgrims continued to travel there from these distant places, but the idea was in the air, and the many brotherhood networks, or *tarekat*, linked together people, who had hitherto been isolated.

Arabic and Persian literature inspired India and Insulindia, and a version of the story of Alexander — hero of Islam and conqueror of the world — can be found as far afield as the Malay world. His presumed tomb can still be seen by travellers near Palembang, in the south of Sumatra. Similarly, some designs can be found reproduced in Gujarat, as in Pasai, or Gresik, in the east of Java. But perhaps the main thing is the emergence of new 'Islamic languages'. Arabic certainly remained the religious language, the sacred language of the Koran, but Persian and Turkish had been profoundly influenced by it, not only from the written point of view, but also in the area of semantics and grammar. In the same way, as a consequence of what has been called 'the second expansion of Islam', other languages, from further afield, were also to be galvanized: Swahili on the African coasts, Urdu in India, Malay in Insulindia. The process was just beginning in the fifteenth century, but it was to develop during the following century.

The Europeans were certainly to have some difficulty in becoming involved in this world of full expansion and potential, and for a long time they would have to learn from their predecessors.

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4

India and the Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century

M. N. Pearson

My aim in this chapter is to investigate the history of the Indian Ocean, focusing on India, in the sixteenth century. As we noted in the Introduction, we are faced immediately with a problem of perspective. This was the century when the Portuguese were the only European power operating in the ocean. They specifically hoped to have a large impact on the ocean; indeed, their empire in Asia was, by force of both design and circumstance, notoriously a maritime one, extending very little distance into the hinterland. This has meant that the Portuguese have bewitched historians, as was stressed in the Introduction. All the standard histories of the Indian Ocean, or of Indian maritime history, start a new chapter when the Portuguese arrive, and often their whole focus swings right around Indian trade to Portuguese activities. Some historians concentrate exclusively on the Portuguese, others at least try to describe the Indian response to their actions. In either case, the Portuguese are seen as important, as altering significantly, even fundamentally, Indian maritime history.

This chapter tries to make the case that such an assumption is invalid. This is not done for anti-Portuguese reasons, as an example of reverse racism, but simply because to see the Portuguese as having a powerful impact on the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century is to distort the facts of the matter. One crucial element here is the very large gap between Portuguese policy and Portuguese practice: too often historians have assumed that they actually achieved their goals. Yet to focus on the Portuguese in order to put them in what seems to me to be a correct perspective is also unsatisfactory, for it still distorts the sixteenth century history of India and the Indian Ocean. Thus I attempt to talk about various aspects of maritime India, explore its links with the Indian Ocean, and mention the Portuguese when they are objectively important. This means that they will be discussed fully when we talk of politics in the Indian Ocean, for in a real sense they introduced politics into the ocean for the first time. They will appear at other times in this chapter also, just as will the Gujaratis, the Moplahs, and many other people seafaring off India in the sixteenth century. But this chapter does not focus on them, either to magnify or belittle their activities. To over-emphasize the Portuguese would be to obscure what I consider to be the main feature of the history of the ocean in this period, that is, an impression of remarkable continuity. The structure described in the previous chapter continued in the sixteenth century. Most Portuguese most of the time fitted into it, at times modifying, but never changing radically, its basic nature.

Our task is a difficult one, not just because of the Eurocentrism of most of the historians of this period, but also because of the nature of the sources. For the sixteenth century we are distressingly dependent on Portuguese sources. Indigenous records are apparently almost completely lacking. Something can be done with oral tradition, and occasionally we have access to a Muslim navigational treatise.[1] The standard histories of sixteenth century India, especially the Persian chronicles, are of very little use, for they reflect prevailing élite Muslim attitudes in ignoring or despising maritime activities. Most valuable would be papers from Indian merchant families in say Coromandel or Gujarat. But it appears that these have not survived, if indeed they ever existed, or at least they are not available to researchers. Temple records could give information on economic matters, and these may turn out to be an important untapped source: by repute they exist in Goa, Gujarat and Coromandel, though they will be very difficult to use or indeed even get access to.

We are thus overwhelmingly reliant on Portuguese records. There are a few advantages, and two important disadvantages, with their use. Portuguese records are comparatively voluminous, and readily available in well-organized archives in Goa, Lisbon, and elsewhere. For the sixteenth century, a very large number have been published over the last few centuries; these publications of both Portuguese and missionary records continue today. The two main disadvantages are first that the Portuguese were not usually interested in matters of concern to a maritime historian today. There is copious detail on their military triumphs, though less on their defeats. There are detailed descriptions of Portuguese forts and towns, but much less on Indian areas. Thus one has to wade through long, self-congratulatory, turgid hyperbole about Portuguese activities to pick up a few nuggets of information about Indian traders. And even when Indians are mentioned, the Portuguese by and large are concerned to belittle them: contempt for local people comes through all too strongly.

The second problem with the surviving Portuguese records, and one which unfortunately is reflected in the following chapter, is that they are comparatively fuller for western India than for the Bay of Bengal. For example, we apparently have much less information about Malacca than about Goa. On the eastern Indian coast, let alone in Bengal, Portuguese power was weaker than on the west coast, and this meant that less information has been left for us. Nevertheless, the Portuguese records are virtually all we have for the sixteenth century, and we must make the best of them.

There are two important areas of debate concerning sea trade in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century: what community did the seafarers belong to and what economic position did the merchant passengers have? It has been generally assumed that the ships of the ocean in 1500 were nearly all Muslim-owned and manned.[2] Indeed, at one time scholars talked of a period of Arab dominance. This, however, if it ever existed had certainly ended by the sixteenth century. The situation was in fact quite complicated in 1500. Muslims no doubt did control the bulk of the trade, and manned most of the ships, but this does not mean they owned all the cargo on board these ships, and in any case these Muslims were very diverse indeed. Some big merchants, and famous pilots, came from the Middle East, especially the Red Sea and Hadramaut areas. However, the majority of Muslim ships were owned by more recently converted Muslims from Gujarat, Malabar and Bengal. The activities of these traders were often geographically divided. Thus Red Sea and Middle East Muslims dominated the trade from Aden to Gujarat, but from Gujarat to Malacca Gujarati Muslims were most important. The same sort of division appears in Malabar, where again trade to the Red Sea was controlled by Middle East Muslims, but the eastward traffic to Malacca was handled by various Indian Muslims.

We must not over-emphasize the degree of Muslim dominance. Even when Hindus stayed ashore, they still could own large parts of the cargo of a ship owned and crewed by Muslims. There is also good evidence of Hindus of various castes trading overseas, for example from Gujarat to east Africa, and down the western Indian coast. Banias traded to, and were resident in, Red Sea and Hadramaut ports from pre-Portuguese times to the end of our period, and indeed until today. From within Hindu India the main seafaring group in 1500 was apparently the Chettyars of Coromandel, who had a very important role in trade in the whole Bay of Bengal area, and especially from Coromandel to Malacca. We have much less evidence about who travelled on coastal craft, but one would expect more of a communal mix here, with both Hindus and Muslims participating. Finally, it does seem clear that the crews of all these ships were overwhelmingly Muslim, hailing from a wide range of Muslim littoral communities. One such were the Navayats of Rander, in Gujarat, who were much praised by the early Portuguese for their navigational skills. Yet here again Muslim dominance was not complete. Various lower caste Hindus in both Malabar and Gujarat sailed ships on coastal routes, and also engaged in fishing.

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[1] See A. Teixeira da Mota, 'Methodes de Navigation et Cartographie Nautique dans l'Ocean Indien avant le XVIe Soecle', *Studia*, 11 (January 1963), pp. 49-91; Tibbetts, G.R. *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean Before the Coming of the Portuguese* (London, 1971).

[2] I have discussed the subject of this section in more detail in *Coastal Western India*, pp. 116-47.

This matter of communal composition is an area where we can see some changes occurring during the sixteenth century, and these changes were caused largely by the Portuguese. They were concerned not only to take over trade in certain products, but also to oppose Muslims. Their attacks at sea led to many Muslims, notably those from the Red Sea, cutting their losses and moving away from areas where the Portuguese were powerful. This happened in Malabar, where the important Red Sea residents left early in the sixteenth century and apparently went to safer parts to the north, or back home. Similarly, on the great Aden to Gujarat route it seems that Red Sea Muslims, thanks at least partly to Portuguese opposition, were replaced during the century by Gujarati Muslims and some Hindu Banias. Banias had been involved in trade to the Red Sea previously, but their share of both financing and actual trade increased markedly in the sixteenth century, as is witnessed by the quite large Bania settlements in all the important Red Sea and Hadramaut ports. We know much less about who traded in the Bay of Bengal. The Chettyars certainly continued to be important, but Coromandel Muslims also traded, as did various Bengali and other communities.

The communal allegiance of people on board ships was thus rather various. The same comment applies when we look at the motives which made people take ship. Some passengers on the Red Sea route were Muslim pilgrims. Other religious specialists, such as Christian priests, also travelled, while others sailed on family or legal business. But these people, and indeed everyone else on board ship, including crew as well as passengers, also traded. It is here that we enter the second, and more important debate over activities in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century: who were the maritime traders? We must first note that there were several sorts of trade. Sometimes the owner of the goods to be traded rented space on board ship for them. He might go with them, but he could also send someone else as his agent, or use an agent in the port of destination. The agent on board ship could be the *nakhoda* himself, who used the goods or money of a shore-based merchant. At the upper end of the scale were some members of the political élite, and some great merchants, who could fit out one or more ships on their own account, usually though again renting out some of the cargo space.

The problems arise when we consider the claims of the important Dutch historian J. C. Van Leur,[3] who has more recently been followed by Auguste Toussaint and Niels Steensgaard. In essence Van Leur found pre-nineteenth century Asian trade to be changeless, done mostly by petty pedlars, characterized by the exchange of luxury goods small in bulk but high in value, and dominated by politically powerful coastal lords. As several scholars, especially M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz and Ashin Das Gupta, have pointed out, there are problems with all four of these claims. First, Asian trade was not completely changeless, as we have had, and will have, occasion to notice even just for the sixteenth century. There were positional changes at least, even if one can see common underlying themes and trends. Thus Gujarati traders began to focus much more on the Red Sea than on southeast Asia in this period, and Hindu Gujaratis apparently took a good share of this trade. As a result of Portuguese depredations foreign Muslims, especially those from the Red Sea, were much less influential in the sixteenth century than they had been. Several trade routes increased in importance—from China to India, from Gujarat to Goa. New products were traded—tobacco, pineapples, chillis. The silk industry in Iran expanded. On both Indian coasts ports prospered or declined: Goa rose, thanks to the Portuguese, but Cambay declined as a result of silting.

Van Leur's image of the pedlar, a petty merchant travelling from port to port with a few bales of goods, and little financial backing, is also questionable. No doubt many such did exist, but other people who traded were wealthy magnates with huge capital resources. Indeed, the Portuguese accounts frequently expiate on the, to them, colossal wealth of the Hindu and Muslim merchants of Gujarat. Similarly, the Red Sea Muslims were far from being pedlars, and nor apparently were some of the Chettyars. It is true that the richest merchants would usually not travel by sea themselves, yet their agents also cannot be considered to be pedlars in Van Leur's sense.

Nor can we follow him in his characterization of the goods traded. Luxuries were of course exchanged — indeed India's prime import was bullion–but many more mundane goods were also carried by sea. The best example is cotton cloth from Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal, some of it costly fine stuff but the majority coarse cloth especially from Gujarat, designed for everyday wear and exported all over seaborne Asia. It was these cloths which paid for the spices of southeast Asia. Indeed, in some agreements between the Portuguese and the suppliers, the price of the spices was fixed in cloths, not money.[4] Food, especially rice, was also traded by sea, within the Bay of Bengal, in Indonesia, and up and down the west coast of India: Indian rice even went to Aden, Hormuz and Malacca. Even so, it is important to keep a sense of proportion here. The volume of sea trade in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century was very much smaller than is the case today. W. H. Moreland claimed that total Indian

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[3] Full reference to all books discussed will be found in the bibliographical essay at the end of this chapter.

[4] L.F. Thomaz, 'Les Portugais dans les mers de l'archipel au XVIe siecle, *Archipel,* 18 (1979), p. 119.

trade in 1600 was equal to the cargo of 'one modern cargo-boat of moderate size sailing in each month of the year'.[5] His estimate of the volume of Indian trade is actually far too small, and in any case the point is that necessities as well as luxuries were traded, even if the total volumes were by modern standards rather minor.

The fourth claim, of domination by coastal lords over the trade of the pedlars, is more difficult to assess, partly because it strikes a sympathetic chord for recent Marxist historians. To explain India's lack of economic development in the seventeenth century they claim either that the Europeans nipped nascent Indian capitalism in the bud, or that oppression from the political élite created such insecurity that economic development was hindered. But both Van Leur and the Marxists fly in the face of the available evidence. Most port controllers correctly saw it in their interests to increase the trade of their port. Merchants could and did respond effectively to the few who were extortionate, either by moving, by shutting up shop, or by appealing to higher authority. Medieval Asian cities were not as autonomous, nor as dominated by merchant élites, as were comparable European cities, but the merchants were far from being powerless. Van Leur, however, ignored the existence of these powerful merchants who were not connected to the political élite.

We have now to consider which were the major sea trade routes in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century, and list the most important products traded. As we have noted, the routes sailed were all governed as to timing and to some extent also direction by the monsoon winds, if we exclude the very minor coastal trade done in oared ships. The glamour routes, on which historians have focused too much attention, can be listed first. At 1500, the longest route was from Aden to Malacca, via either Gujarat or Malabar. The goods entering the Red Sea included cottons, indigo, spices and drugs, while from this area came European woollens, silks, and bullion. Gujarat provided most of these cloths and indigo, and took much of the bullion. From Malabar, especially through Calicut, came some of the pepper, and cinnamon transhipped from Sri Lanka.

Malacca, the great entrepôt, received cloths from India and bullion from the Red Sea, and provided in return pepper, mace, nutmeg and cloves from eastern Indonesia, and Chinese goods, especially silks and porcelain. A second major route, dominated by Gujaratis, brought ebony, slaves, ivory and gold from east Africa to India. Cloths, beads and foodstuffs were provided in return.

From the Hadramaut, and the Persian Gulf via Hormuz, came horses, pearls from the Gulf, Persian silks and carpets, and dyes. In the Bay of Bengal area, Bengal exported cloths and foodstuffs, while Coromandel provided cloths and yarns. In the south, Sri Lanka produced precious stones and cinnamon, and to the east, Pegu took cloths and exported precious stones and metals.

Most of these are long-distance trade items, involving voyages of some weeks at least, and perhaps dominated by big merchants rather than pedlars. We know much less about coastal trade in the century, but clearly at 1500 it was extensive, with numerous small ships engaged in transporting local products to the great entrepôts for re-export. Cinnamon usually came up from Sri Lanka to Calicut. Malabar pepper came overland or by sea to the same entrepôt. Sumatran pepper came by sea to Malacca, as did other Indonesian and Chinese products. Other coastal trade was simple exchange of goods not destined for re-export: thus Gujarati and Coromandel cloths were carried to ports in their immediate vicinities on the west and east coasts, and around to Pegu. The trade in food, especially rice, was very extensive. Canara supplied other areas on the west coast of India, Malacca got its rice from Java, Siam, and Pegu.

There were minor changes in some of these routes during the sixteenth century, and some of these changes were either directly or indirectly the result of the Portuguese and their policies. These changes will be considered when we come to look at politics in the Indian Ocean. For our present purposes the point to keep in mind is that the Portuguese in fact had very little success in changing these trade routes, even the great international ones on which they concentrated. Over coastal routes they exercised very little control. Portuguese private traders themselves, whether officials, military leader, or private merchants, participated in Asian coastal trade on a basis of equality. Sometimes they shipped their goods on Asian ships, and sometimes Asians shipped on Portuguese craft. Asians frequently financed Portuguese ventures. As early as 1523 it was reported that wood for shipbuilding was scarce in Cochin, for it was all being bought by Portuguese who wanted to settle in India and live by trade. Even this early they were trading from Malabar to Malacca, Pegu, Bengal, Coromandel, eastern Indonesia, Hormuz, Chaul and Cambay, indeed to all the major trade areas of the Indian Ocean, whether under Portuguese control or not.

Studies of this private Portuguese trade (notably by G. Bouchon and L. F. Reis Thomaz) constitute the most exciting new research being done at present on the Portuguese empire. The parallels with the information later in this book in the chapters by Marshall and Watson are obvious. The Crown, it is true, tended to discourage private trade, for it decreased the number of Portuguese available for military service, and at times competed with the Crown's own trade. Yet the Portuguese state also was forced to co-operate with local people.

In November 1511, the governor, Afonso de Albuquerque, sent a small fleet from Malacca to 'discover' the Moluccas. The fleet had Javanese pilots, and a local merchant ship with a rich Muslim Malaccan merchant on board preceded the Portuguese to prepare the way for them.[6] Later, even on large Portuguese ships, the crew was most likely to consist entirely of Asians, or African slaves. Only the officers and a few soldiers would be Portuguese. In Malacca, royal officials would take half shares for the Crown in local ships, and the Portuguese factor would be the only European on board. It is true that this sort of partnership was less seen in some other areas, such as Malabar. Nevertheless, in general the Crown as much as private Portuguese was often found co-operating with Asian traders, benefitting from their local knowledge and capital resources.

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[5] W. H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar*, pp. 310-12.

In the Asian context Portuguese private traders were in no way remarkable. Rather they, like many other different trading communities, fitted in to the complex warp and weft of coastal Asian trade. Many married Asian women, or maintained retinues of female slaves who served also as concubines. In this age before the dominance of the nation state, many Portuguese, officials, clerics and *casados*, thought nothing of trading 'illegally' in spices, or with states with which the *Estado da India* was at war. Similarly, Portuguese pirates plundered both Asian and Portuguese ships. J.B.Harrison quoted the observation of a Dutch governor, Anthony Van Dieman, on this: 'Most of the Portuguese in India look upon this region as their fatherland, and think no more about Portugal. They drive little or no trade thither, but content themselves with the port-to-port trade of Asia, just as if they were natives thereof and had no other country.'[7]

This observation applies equally to the few trade routes which expanded greatly under the Portuguese. Leaving aside the obviously new route around the Cape of Good Hope to Europe, and the later sixteenth century Macao-Japan trade done by the Portuguese, the greatest increase as a result of the Portuguese presence was in the coastal trade between Gujarat and Goa. This route had of course existed before the Portuguese arrived, and in terms of total Gujarati trade it was not very important anyway in the sixteenth century. My own estimate is that it involved some five per cent of Gujarat's total tade.[8] Nevertheless, several hundred coastal craft did make this voyage each year, but even here there was much more co-operation and intermingling than Portuguese dominance. Gujarati merchants and their capital, and Indian traders from the Konkan area, appear to have had greater shares in the cargoes than did Portuguese: we are told that 'There are but few of the inhabitants of Goa, whether Christian or others, that have not a share in this fleet...' It seems that Portuguese sent goods on Gujarati ships, and vice versa, in a promiscuous and intermingled fashion quite typical of private Portuguese country trade in general. Here, rather than the grandiloquent state attempt at monopoly, was where the interest of most Portuguese was involved.

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[6] B. W. Diffie and G. D. Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire*, p. 363.

[7] J. B. Harrison in *New Cambridge Modern History*, IV, p. 646

[8] M. N. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat*, p. 110.

Politics and the Indian Ocean

Two themes are discussed in this section. First, there is the question of the activities of political entities, and other groups and factions, *on land* which affected the Indian Ocean, and especially its trade. Second, there is political and military action at sea.

None of the major states of sixteenth century India played any important role in maritime affairs. In the north, the declining Lodi sultanate, and then the new and expanding Mughal empire, were entirely land-based in terms both of resources and ethos. The vast bulk of the revenue of the Mughal state came from land revenue, whether it was collected by a *jagirdar* or by the state. A further part was derived from other land-based sources, for example, various tolls and transit fees. Only perhaps at most five per cent came from customs revenue. It is true that some of the land-based revenues related to sea trade: thus crops grown for export paid land revenue, while some transit taxes were paid on goods destined for export. Nevertheless, the revenue resources of the Mughal empire were overwhelmingly from the land.

This fact interlocked with, and no doubt helped to create, a north Indian Muslim élite ethos which was again oriented to the land. The Mughals came from interior Asia. Babur, the first of the dynasty, never saw the sea. Akbar, his greatest successor, responded with puzzlement and delight when he first did, in the Gulf of Cambay at the age of thirty. For this militarily oriented élite culturally sanctioned activities were land activities, especially heroic cavalry charges, and more prosaically the struggle to control more land and so more resources. To quote only one of several contemporary Muslim aphorisms: 'Wars by sea are merchants' affairs, and of no concern to the prestige of kings.'

All this applies equally well to the southern states. In Deccan, the Muslim political élite was preoccupied during the century with establishing independent states after the Bahmani disintegration late in the previous century, then with struggles between themselves and with Hindu Vijayanagar further south, and after 1565 and the end of Vijayanagar with expanding over its ruins. In none of these élite preoccupations did maritime matters play any role at all.

The only possible exception is the matter of the *hajj*, which we discussed in the Introduction. Muslim rulers, especially newly established ones, were concerned either for reasons of personal piety, or in order to impress the orthodox, with making it possible for the faithful to travel to Mecca and Medina. For our present purposes, the point is that while the Mughals at least, and presumably other rulers also, patronized this activity this did not mean that they became actively involved in maritime matters. The clearest proof of this is that Akbar was prepared to take passes from the Portuguese in order to be allowed to send off his pilgrim ships. The object of the exercise was to send people to the Holy Cities; the means were subordinated to this end, and the traffic did not involve state political concern with the sea.

The same applies to the private trading activities of the Indian political élite. Particular nobles, and ladies of the royal harem, usually using agents, did send off goods on their own accounts, and did sometimes lend money to other sea traders. At least in the sixteenth century this was a minor activity in terms of the incomes of most of this élite, and did not lead to any involvement on their part in political action directed to the sea.

The only exception to this general rule concerns the relatively small number of state officials or quasi officials who derived major parts of their incomes from taxes on maritime activity, or from their own sea trade. There is a continuum here, ranging from say the police chief of Agra, who derived no revenue, even tangentially, from maritime matters, to the collector of customs at Surat, whose entire income might come from taxing sea trade. We must remember, however, that a port official, or governor, could also receive part or all of his income from land revenue. Thus the vast majority of officials in any of the major states were at the first end of our continuum. In the middle were primarily land-based men part of whose income came from taxes on goods destined to be exported by sea: for example, *jagirdars* whose revenue came from cotton producing areas, or zamindars who collected dubiously sanctioned tolls on the bullock carts going from Agra to Surat. At the other, and very atypical, extreme is a small number of men like a customs collector. They also included governors of port-cities: examples from Gujarat are Malik Ayaz in Diu, and later Khwaja Safar and Muhammad Qulij Khan in Surat. These men were sea oriented, at least in part. They themselves were landlubbers, but crucial parts of their revenues came from taxes on sea trade, and from their own trading activities. They were concerned to see this trade continue.

Apart from these servants of large, land oriented states a few other political leaders have to be included in this end of our continuum. These were the rulers of petty seaborne states focused on particular port-cities. The clearest examples of these are the rulers of Malabar: the Zamorin of Calicut, and the rajas of Cochin, Cannanore, Quilon and various other minor ports. Comparatively little of the revenue of such rulers came from the land; rather, important part of state income was based on direct and indirect profits from sea trade. Customs duties and port charges are most obvious here, but we have also to include land revenue on areas producing pepper, various taxes and charges to do with its transport and weighing, and the market cesses and charges deriving from the role of their ports as entrepôts.

The nature of these has received some attention recently, as Niels Steensgaard claims that 'protection costs' imposed a heavy levy on traders. There is no doubt that taxes and other charges were usually not collected in the sort of regular and routine way we are used to today. Rates of payment were flexible and subject to negotiation. No doubt customs collectors could be arbitrary, while local rajas controlling strategic passes or river crossings tended to charge what the traffic would bear. These sorts of slightly fuzzy, and sometimes capricious, payments were hardly unique to sixteenth century India. Portuguese officials behaved identically, and complaints were made not about this sort of collection method but only when it was abused too greatly and so became dysfunctional. A second point, therefore, is that in most cases there were options available: a different route could be taken, the port of an overly extortionate customs collector avoided. Clearly it was in the interests of the ruler to avoid this. Their aim was always to increase trade, and to do this, facilities had to be provided, and greedy subordinates curbed. Abuses were worst when the ruler was weak; thus as the Portuguese state declined later in the century local Portuguese governors, such as those of Diu, went so far as not just to fleece traders unmercifully, but also to steal cannon from their own forts, and use it to protect their illegally-trading client Indians from more law-abiding Portuguese fleets.

Leaving aside this matter of payments, the general point is that it was this small number of political élite, some fully independent, others in tribute relationship, and other more formally officials of a larger state, who were crucially oriented to sea matters in sixteenth century India. These men by and large even so took a rather passive role when they could. They tried to increase the trade of their particular port or city, and to ward off threats to it, but none of them pursued more active policies, such as trying to force traders to call. Similarly, while most such men traded rather extensively on their own account, and no doubt their use of their political power helped such private trade, they did not go beyond this to try, for example, to engross large areas of trade for the state or themselves. Nor indeed, during the whole century, did any of these men have navies in any way comparable to the contemporary Ottoman Turks or Portuguese.

Below or alongside this level of élite political activity was another, that of non-governmental people in India. Here again it is a matter of shadings rather than clear distinctions. Thus the Moplah Kunjalis, the naval auxiliaries of the Zamorins of Calicut, clearly did take part in politics both on land and at sea, and were at times only loosely part of the official government hierarchy of Calicut. More immediately relevant here are the political activities of merchants actually engaged in sea trade. In this matter, as so often, our documentation lets us down. From seventeenth century English and Dutch records we know of their activities in most of the great ports of India, activities designed to counter extortion and oppression from officials, or to do down a rival. While there are hints of city-wide merchant organizations, much of this political activity was done by groups based on caste or other communal divisions: all the Banias in a town, or perhaps particular subdivisions within this broad category; Muslims of Turkish origin; Khoja Muslims; and so on.

One would expect these sorts of activities in sixteenth century port-cities also, and indeed we have at least some evidence of this. Opposition to the Portuguese in Malacca in 1510–11 was led by Gujarati Muslims, who had already realized how threatening to their interests were Portuguese policies. In Calicut, when the Portuguese arrived the merchants trading to the Red Sea, mostly Egyptians and other Middle East Muslims, appear to have had a history of co-operative activity, and certainly they combined to oppose the extraordinary demands of the Portuguese. But their efforts failed in the city in the face of Portuguese naval power, and soon they moved out to safer areas. Other communally and/or occupationally based groups in Calicut at this time included the local Moplahs, the Hindus, Muslims and Nestorian Christians who bought and transported the pepper, and the Hindus who grew it. All these no doubt engaged in political actions to safeguard their livelihoods. The Moplahs of course did this most overtly and militantly, by continuing throughout the century to send armed ships with cargoes of pepper north to Gujarat.

In the Coromandel area, we have some seventeenth century studies of merchants combining for the advantage of their particular community or occupation. Again, we can only assume that such groups existed, and were at times politically effective, in the previous century. In Gujarat we do have evidence from Portuguese Diu both of Gujarati merchants engaging in factional struggles amongst themselves to secure economic advantage for a particular group or community, and of bodies of merchants combining to oppose various Portuguese demands. On a less combative level, merchant leaders were consulted by the Portuguese over, for example, the matter of rates of customs duties payable, and various Gujaratis co-operated with the Portuguese in trading activities. Similarly, in the port of Cambay there are signs of very well-organized mercantile groups. All this is shadowy enough, but it is clear that India's port-cities generally contained merchants who, far from being atomized and isolated, were organized into various communally based groups. What was lacking, except perhaps in some of the cities of Gujarat, was city-wide, all-inclusive, regularly constituted merchant bodies.

Turning now from land political influences on maritime matters to the sea itself, the greatest political change in the area of maritime history in sixteenth century India was a contribution of the Portuguese: in fact, they have the dubious distinction of being the people who introduced politics into the ocean. The situation at the time of their arrival is well known. On particular routes particular merchant groups were dominant. Thus Chettyars largely controlled trade between Coromandel and Malacca, Gujaratis controlled most western Indian coastal trade, and participated on other routes also. Middle East Muslims dominated the Calicut–Red Sea route. In every case, however, this dominance was achieved by superiority in peaceful commercial competition. We have no evidence of any use of force at all. Similarly, the rulers of the great trade centres of the ocean, Malacca, Calicut, Hormuz, Aden and the several ports of the Gulf of Cambay (in 1500 principally Diu, Cambay, Broach, Rander and Surat) owed the success of their ports to locaton, good facilities for visiting merchants, in some cases productive hinterlands, but not coercion. No warships patrolled forcing ships to call at any of these ports; those who traded there did so because they wanted to.

Not that this was some sort of pre-European Golden Age. Among the merchants competition was fierce, even cut-throat; a lone outsider would find it almost completely impossible to break in one of the established quasi-monopolistic routes. We have noted already some extortion at customs houses, and some evidence of arbitrary actions by local officials. As a further blemish, piracy was widespread in the Indian Ocean at the start of the century, and land powers took few, and these mostly ineffective, steps to control it. The fact remains that the ocean at 1500 was genuinely a mare liberum where no state tried to control maritime matters. Perhaps most indicative of this is the fact that in 1500 Asian ships carried no cannon. This was partly because sewn ships were likely to disintegrate if cannon were fired from them, but more because there was little need for them.

Portuguese policy was totally new, but was less than totally effective. We will discuss policy first, and then practice: they must be separated because there was such a gap between the two. The quasi-official chronicler, Joao de Barros, set out quite clearly the Portuguese justification for their policies: the Portuguese in Asia were lords of the sea, and made all other ships take a safe-conduct or *cartaz* from them. Ships trading with enemies of Portugal could be seized on sight. By common law the seas were open to all, but this applied only in Europe to Christians, who were governed essentially by the principles of Roman Law. Hindus and Muslims, on the contrary, were outside Roman Law as they were outside the law of Jesus Christ, which all men must keep to avoid the eternal fire. Further, Hindus and Muslims had no claim to right of passage in Asian waters because before the arrival of the Portuguese no one had claimed the sea as hereditary or conquered property. There being no preceding title, there was no present or future right of passage.

The military scaffolding designed to enforce these claims was erected early in the sixteenth century. Vasco da Gama arrived near Calicut in 1498. The second Portuguese expediton, in 1500, was instructed to sink Muslim ships on sight. In 1503 they built their first fort at Cochin. Six years later the Portuguese won a major sea battle when they defeated a combined Egyptian–Gujarati–Calicut fleet at Diu; their dominance of western Indian water was not seriously challenged again in the sixteenth century. The greatest conquests on land came during the governorship of Afonso de Albuquerque (1509-15). He had a clear vision of the key points of Asian trade, and moved purposefully to acquire them. Goa was taken in 1510, Malacca in 1511, and Hormuz in 1515.

These conquests provided the means to enforce Portugal's trade control system. There were two strands of Portuguese policy. First they claimed monopolies over trade in certain products, and on certain routes. Thus the trade in all spices was meant to be totally reserved to the Portuguese crown, as was the importing of horses to western India. Trade from Goa to Malacca, from Diu to east Africa, from western India to Macao and Japan, and of course from Goa to Europe, all were Portuguese monopolies. These routes were either sailed in crown ships or, later, sold, subsumed as one of the perquisites of a particular office, or given as a reward for past service. All this was dramatic and innovative enough, but potentially even more wideranging was the Portuguese claim, as Lords of the Sea, to be able to control, direct and tax all trade in the Indian Ocean. In theory every ship had to carry a Portuguese *cartaz* or pass, and pay customs duties at a Portuguese fort. The terms of the *cartaz* included restrictions on the personnel and armaments allowed on the ship, its route, and the cargo it could carry. Portuguese fleets patrolled Asain waters to enforce both parts of this system. Portuguese aspirations were neatly summed up in the grandiloquent title her king bestowed on himself as early as 1499: Lord of Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia and India.

Portuguese policy did however change in important ways during the sixteenth century, though these changes were more positional than structural. Very early in the century inter-Asian trade became more important for the Portuguese crown than the trade via the Cape of Good Hope to Europe. When European concessionaires were later licensed by the crown to take over the monopoly routes mentioned above, they found that the profits made on the Cape route were only twenty per cent of the total. The rest came from the inter-Asian trade.[9] Thus not only private Portuguese trade, but also that done, or licensed, by the Crown was focused on Asia. The difference between the two strands is that the Crown routes were meant to be sailed on a monopoly basis, and hence can be seen as innovatory, at least as regards intention, even if in practice the routes, and the goods carried, simply duplicated existing norms. On the other hand, as we noted, the private trade was completely subsumed in, and part of, the traditional trade of the Indian Ocean.

A further change occurred around mid-century. From this time the Crown increasingly contracted out its 'rights', and disengaged itself from commerce. It turned to political matters, relying for revenue on the profits from the contracted voyages, and on the profits from directing and taxing other Asian trade. And in this they loosened up considerably. The aim was increasingly to allow or even foster Asian trade, even to hostile Muslim areas like the Red Sea, for thus Portuguese customs duties increased. In other words, in practice official Portuguese trade also became more indigenous. Nevertheless, official Portuguese policy remained largely intact throughout the century. They always claimed a monopoly over the spice trade, and the right to control and tax all other trade.

There were problems in making effective this system, and these dictated how much effect the system had on local traders. There were several strategic gaps and problems. While Goa, Malacca, Hormuz, Diu (1535) and various areas in east Africa, Sri Lanka and western India were taken by the Portuguese, they failed crucially to control the mouth of the Red Sea. Their base on the island of Socotra was too far from the entrance to be effective in controlling trade to it, and was soon abandoned, while the key port of Aden remained in Muslim hands throughout. The failure of Albuquerque, in 1513, and later others to capture Aden was the critical military failure of the Portuguese. In 1538 it was taken by the Ottoman Turks. A second major gap was that via the Sunda Strait, which controlled the most important route outside of Portuguese control to China and Japan.

It must in any case be doubted whether Portugal's military efforts were correctly directed. They ended up with a string of some fifty forts and fortified areas in seaborne Asia. All of these required at least some garrison, and were at times subject to attack. They thus constituted a drain on Portugal's resources, and were in any case of dubious strategic value. Several critics during the century made the point that a few well-located land bases, and a stronger fleet, would be more effective. But the Portuguese, like many later imperialists, found involvement easy but withdrawal difficult: thus resources drained away on unnecessary forts.

Many later writers have made the point that resources were lost through the prevalence of corruption in the Portuguese administration. This matter is not as simple as it may appear at first sight, as we have already noted. Certainly much payment of officials came not from salaries but from perquisites of various sorts, and these sometimes, especially later in the century, shaded off into the outright abuses and extortions already discussed. It has been claimed that this meant that Indian traders avoided Portuguese areas for fear of ill-treatment, while the state itself suffered from lack of funds consequent on this speculation. In fact Asian traders would obviously not call at Portuguese forts to pay extra customs duties unless they were forced to, regardless of how they were treated once they were there, while the state's financial problems seem to have come from over-expenditure on unnecessary military activities and establishments, and from a decline in revenue consequent on increased evasion of the Portuguese system. It must be noted, however, that these financial problems affected the state, but not necessarily its subjects. As we saw, many Portuguese in Asia did very well out of their private trade. This success may, of course, have even contributed to the problems of the state.

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[9] L. F. Reis Thomaz, 'Portuguese Sources on Sixteenth Century Indian Economic History,' in John Correia-Afonso (ed.), *Indo-Portuguese History*, p. 101.

The basic fault of the Portuguese system was that it was ethnocentrically overly ambitious. Logistically, financially, militarily, it was simply impossible for one small (population about one and one-quarter million), distant (on average ships sailing from Lisbon to Goa and return travelled about 23,000 miles, and took 18 months over the voyage) country to put into effect such grandiose policies. There was far too much ocean to cover (the islands and seas of the Malay archipelago alone cover about four million square miles, more than the area of the whole continental USA.[10], far too many skilled and determined Asian traders able to avoid Portuguese control, and far too few Portuguese available. Boxer notes that it was always difficult for a viceroy to get together 1,000 men for any expedition. In the whole empire, from Mozambique to Macao, there were never more than perhaps 10,000 able-bodied Europeans and Eurasians available for military and naval service.[11]

What we need to do, therefore, is delineate more closely where Portuguese policies were effective, and where they were not. They achieved moderate control over the rather unimportant trade of east Africa. Despite Portuguese naval patrols, the Red Sea was nearly always open, while the coast between Aden and Hormuz was little affected. Hormuz did enable the Portuguese to control quite successfully access to the Persian Gulf. Here, however, they were subject to pressure from the ambitious Shahs of the new and expanding Safavid empire, and from the even more aggressive Ottoman Turks in Basra, at the head of the Persian Gulf. As a result, increasing amounts of pepper flowed through the Straits of Hormuz to Basra later in the century; much of it was taken on via the traditional caravan routes to the heartland of the Ottoman empire and to the Mediterranean.

From Hormuz around to Diu, Portuguese fleets again were unable to enforce much adherence to their system. Their greatest success was in controlling for most of the century access to the Gulf of Cambay, and its great ports. South from here, over most of the western coast of India, Portuguese power was also effective, at least most of the time. From Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin) all the way around the Bay of Bengal to Malacca they had little effect. Their fleets off Malacca gave them some influence in these straits, but east of Malacca in all of Indonesia, and east Asia, they really had no success in enforcing a monopoly over the spice trade and controlling other trade.

The small number of members of Asia's political élite affected by these policies responded in ways dictated to them by their own perceptions and strengths. We shall first look briefly at areas outside India. In China when the Portuguese in 1521-22 tried to enforce control over the trade of Canton, they were beaten off by the coastguard fleet. Subsequently, in 1557, the Portuguese were allowed unofficially to establish a trade centre at Macao, but Chinese suspicions continued. Malacca was subject to frequent attacks from Johor and later Java and the vigorous new Muslim state of Acheh. The Ottoman Turks also responded to the Portuguese, besieging Diu in 1538 with some Gujarati help, and in 1551-2 attacking Hormuz and Muscat. The latter was taken and sacked. In 1585-86 a sole Turkish ship virtually drove the Portuguese from the whole Swahili coast of east Africa. Such was the response from powers outside India to the Portuguese introduction of politics into oceanic affairs. Excepting perhaps the Ottomans, the other attacks were all direct responses to Portuguese provocations. We can now turn to India.

The Zamorin of Calicut in 1498 expected the Portuguese to behave like any other group of foreign traders, in a way comparable to the rest of the very heterogeneous population of Calicut. When the Portuguese made their aims clear, by both actions and words, the Zamorin explicitly felt he could not accept their demands. As he asked, how could he 'expel more than 4,000 (foreign Muslim households) who live in Calicut as natives, not as strangers, and from whom his kingdom had received much profit?' He had in fact no option but to resist, given that the Portuguese wanted to monopolize the very pepper trade on which the prosperity of Calicut was based. Compromise was probably never possible, given these clashing aims and interests, and certainly the legacy of the early struggles, and the activities of the only loosely controlled Moplah corsairs, meant that war would continue. Like other rulers surprised by the Portuguese, the Zamorin learnt quickly. As early as 1506 he had a fleet of 200 warships, no doubt small, but protected from Portuguese cannon by bales of cotton in the gunwales. More important, these ships now had cannons on board, thanks to the help of two Milanese 'renegades'.[12] The case of Cochin, and also of Cannanore and Quilon, was rather different, for as a result of Portuguese policy these cities, especially Cochin, were able to move from political and economic subordination to Calicut to a much more prosperous position, albeit now dominated by the Portuguese. There were during the century serious strains in the relationship, yet there were the benefits of increased trade as a carrot, and the stick, the awful warning of Calicut, on the other side.

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[10] B. Diffie and G. Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire*, p. 361.

[11] C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, p. 53.

[12] B. Diffie and G. Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire*, p. 232.

The response from the political élite of Gujarat also fits this pattern. The first response of the controllers of the port-cities in the Gulf of Cambay was to temporize, and later to resist Portuguese pretensions: Malik Ayaz in Diu and later Khwaja Safar in Surat sought outside help, and tried to combat Portuguese claims. Even as late as the 1580s a Mughal noble new to the Gujarati situation, Muhammad Qulij Khan, tried to challenge the Portuguese. None of these efforts succeeded, and it seems that most of the controllers of Gujarati ports followed the example of Malik Ayaz after his challenge, in which he was helped by the Zamorin and an Egyptian fleet, failed in 1509. This response consisted really of accepting Portuguese control, which in the event turned out not to be so onerous for their interests anyway: Gujarati merchants still paid taxes at their ports. Indeed, Portuguese activities opened some minor new trade routes, and so possibly increased Gujarati exports, and some of these officials also were able to co-operate with their Portuguese counterparts for mutual advantage. For these people the end result of the Portuguese presence was thus rather negligible. The Zamorin did worst, Cochin and some other Malabar ports a little better, while in Gujarat their interests were little affected in the long run.

The situation on the eastern coast was quite different, for here Portuguese power intruded very little indeed. The Portuguese had no forts, except at Malacca. From their factories at Hooghly and San Thome their trade, whether official or private, was on a basis of equality. Thus in the 1540s Gujaratis were able to trade in spices in the Bay of Bengal with impunity, and later they helped to open a very large pepper trade from Acheh to the Red Sea. Similarly, the great trade from Coromandel to southeast Asia, and especially Malacca, continued, and the controllers of the Coromandel ports, such as Nagapatnam, Pulicat, and Masulipatnam, were undisturbed from the sea. At times trade from their ports to Malacca was hindered by the gross excesses of the loosely controlled Portuguese captains of Malacca, but this was not a constant—Malacca's trade seems to have increased in the second half of the sixteenth century,[13] and in any case there were alternatives to Malacca. The same applies to the ports of Hooghly, Sripur and Chittagong in Bengal. In all these ports the major political events of the sixteenth century were, in the case of Bengal, their incorporation into the Mughal empire, and in Coromandel later in the century the warfare consequent on the end of central power after the defeat of Vijayanagar in 1565.

Indian traders responded to this ramshackle attempt at coercion by ignoring or resisting where possible, and by giving in and accommodating when they had no choice. The initial response was similar to that of the foreign Muslims in Calicut—surprise, annoyance and resentment at Portugal's unprecedented claims, and resistance to them. Thus the political élite obviously tried to block Portugal's attacks on Goa, Malacca, Diu and Hormuz, but the traders also resisted. There are numerous early sixteenth century reports of Muslim ships, from Gujarat and Malabar especially, trying to ignore the Portuguese system, and even attacking them first. In 1519 Gujarati Muslims sacked the Portuguese factory in the Maldive Islands, killing all eight Portuguese there. But soon both élite and traders found military confrontation to be rather unsuccessful. From the 1520s Asian traders responded in three ways. In areas tightly controlled by the Portuguese, but where Portuguese policies did not affect their interests too much, local traders gave up resistance and acquiesced. In Gujarat, and the west coast south past Goa, acceptance of Portuguese control meant simply paying extra custom duties at Diu or another Portuguese fort, and then sailing as usual: extra payments of about five per cent *ad valorem* could be recouped by raising prices. Most of the political élite, as we noted, felt no interest in maritime matters, and so left the traders to make their own arrangements with the Portuguese. Those few who resisted because their interests were seriously affected, like Malik Ayaz and Khwaja Safar, were defeated. In these areas Portuguese control was not too irksome, and indeed in the second half of the century, as the Portuguese empire, consequent on its failure to monopolize the spice trade, got into increasing financial difficulties, Portuguese policy became more relaxed. In particular, and very important for Gujarati trade, restrictions on trade with hostile Muslim areas, notably the Red Sea, were dropped.

In other areas, notably Malabar, Portuguese policy was also relatively effective, and yet bore down more heavily on local trade. Malabar's main export was pepper, which the Portuguese wanted to monopolize, and they achieved some success thanks to their several forts and active naval patrolling off the southwest coast. The foreign Muslims moved out once resistance was seen to be futile, or at least costly, but the locals, especially the Moplahs, had no choice but to resist. These people, called 'pirates' by the Portuguese, were remarkably successful. Huge amounts of pepper were transported outside the Portuguese system by local traders by land and sea. In Malabar and Canara, in the first decade of the seventeenth century only about one-tenth of total production went to Lisbon.[14] The rest was traded outside the Portuguese system, and there is no reason to think that the situation was any different in the previous century.

Thus even in western India, their strongest centre, the Portuguese were relatively unsuccessful. As a broad generalization, it can be said that in the rest of Asia they had very little impact at all. Coastal trade in the whole Bay of Bengal area continued undisturbed. Past Malacca the Portuguese never even attempted to control or monopolize trade, except for the trade in spices, in which their success was very limited. As one specific example, L. F. Thomaz has estimated that over the whole century the Portuguese never took more than one-eighth of the total clove production of the Moluccas to Europe.[15] The rest was traded in Asia, and largely outside their control. The extent of their failure is also seen in the fate of their attempt to monopolize the trade in pepper. It has been clearly shown that the trade via the Red Sea to the Mediterranean and the Middle East revived around mid-century, and soon surpassed that done by the Portuguese around the Cape of Good Hope. Reports from the 1540s point to a very large pepper trade by Gujaratis outside the Portuguese system in the Bay of Bengal. Soon after the pepper trade from Indonesia, and especially Acheh, to the Red Sea also revived; huge amounts were transported in ships owned by Muslims from the Middle East and from Gujarat.

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[13] J. B. Harrison in *New Cambridge Modern History*, III, pp. 541-2

[14] A. R. Disney, *Twilight of the Pepper Empire*, p. 36

This failure to block trade to the Red Sea has sometimes disguised for historians the fact that in terms of the total Asian spice trade, not just the small amount of it which went to the Red Sea and Europe, the Portuguese role was even more limited. Over the huge amounts consumed in Asia, from the Middle East to east Asia, for most of the time in most areas the Portuguese were irrelevant. In the area most tightly under their control we have already noted their failure: they had even less control in the other pepper-producing areas, or over the areas producing other spices. Especially in the area east of Malacca, the Portuguese presence was much more pacific and informal, as compared with their presence in the Arabian Sea. They had only one fort, and that a rickety one, at Tidore. The Portuguese appear not to have really tried here. Despite their claim to monopolize all trade in all spices everywhere, they soon tacitly changed this to apply only to the supply of spices to Europe, and as we noted even in this they failed. China consumed huge amounts of pepper. One can assume that most of this was grown in Sumatra, and was transported via the Sunda Strait (a 'gap' as crucial as Aden for the Portuguese) to China.

What then was the total effect of the extraordinary Portuguese policies on Indian Ocean trade? The sketch given above points to a very limited impact indeed. Any total picture of Asian trade in the sixteenth century must emphasize continuity rather than change. The direct route from India via the Cape of Good Hope to Europe was of course new, and no doubt increased a little the trade between these two regions, which had formerly been restricted to overland routes from Basra and Suez. Similarly, the Goa–Malacca–Macao–Japan trade, which developed later in the sixteenth century, was new in terms of the route sailed, but did not alter significantly the exchange of goods in the Indian Ocean region. More typical is their effect on Malacca's trade. Here one can see little Portuguese innovation.

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[15] L. F. Thomaz in Correia-Afonso (ed.), *Indo-Portuguese History* p. 100.

Rather the routes sailed and the products traded from this great port continued as before, after a slight fall early in the century. The change comes with the establishment of Batavia by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, not with the Portuguese conquest of 1511. True, the Gujarati Muslims left, at least for a time, but only to continue their same trade in other ports of Indonesia, notably Acheh. In other areas where the Portuguese presence was effective, and this was a rare occurrence, acceptance of their claims was painless enough in most areas. Where their claims impinged drastically on existing trade, as in Malabar, considerable evasion was possible. In most other locations their system could be ignored, and alternatives to their ports were available. This was especially the case later in the century, when the Portuguese were concerned more to increase trade than to worry about where it went.

Three more general trends can be attributed to the Portuguese. First, their efforts appear to have resulted in an increase in piracy in western Indian waters, as traders whom they had dispossessed were forced to use this alternative. Second, the Portuguese were far more opposed to 'foreign' Muslim than to that done by Hindus and local Muslims. Thus Hindu (and Gujarati Muslim) trade to the Red Sea from Gujarat increased at the expense of the Middle East Muslim trade from Malabar. Finally, the Portuguese presence did increase, to varying degrees in different areas, the 'protection costs' levied on local trade. Steensgaard's term is in fact not quite appropriate. Wherever they could the Portuguese levied customs duties on Indian ships in addition to those paid in their home ports. Thus a Surat ship would pay on leaving Surat, then at Portuguese Diu, then at its destination, again at Diu, and then finally at Surat. The actual increase was bearable and recoupable, but the payment was really for protection from Portuguese depredations, and had no element of reciprocity. In particular, Portuguese policies if anything increased piracy, and yet except on the western Indian coast, and even here rather unsuccessfully, they provided no protection from it. Thus the cost of the *cartaz*, and the payment of extra duties, were really sheer unreciprocal extortion by the Portuguese. On the western coast they organized convoys, and the dual purpose of these sums up the coercive nature of their total system; the escorting fleets were there partly to protect the Indian ships in the convoy against piracy, but more to make sure these ships put into Portuguese areas and there traded and paid customs.

From around the middle of the eighteenth century politics in the Indian Ocean area did impinge decisively on the fate of Indian traders and states, though this impact also owed much to technological developments. This was in the future. Concerning the Portuguese impact in the sixteenth century, in this matter at least Van Leur and his followers are correct. The Portuguese tried much, but had very little success. At a lower level, private Portuguese simply joined in on existing trade routes, and were in no way distinguishable within the very heterogeneous trading world of the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century. The century was, in maritime matters, characterized more by equilibrium than by radical change. We have noted some new routes and products, and some other changes, and some of these were either initiated by the Portuguese or were a response to their presence. The general success of these responses shows that Indian maritime life in the century was far from static, and was quite capable of change if this were needed. But in general during the century fundamental change appeared not to be needed, so that by 1600 life on the sea continued much as it had been for some centuries. Positional changes occurred, but not alterations in basic themes and structures.

Bibliographical Note

Books dealing with the Indian Ocean, and Indian maritime history, were discussed in the Introducton. All of these have chapters or sections on the Portuguese and the sixteenth century. The best general survey of the Portuguese empire is of course C. R. Boxer's *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (London, 1969). For those who read French or Portuguese an essential work is the very detailed study by V. Magalhaes Godinho. The longer, and preferable, version is in Portuguese: *Os Descobrimentos e a Economia mundial,* 4 vols. (Lisbon, 1981-83), while the inferior French version is called *L'Economie de l'Empire Portuguais aux XVe et XVIe siecles* (Paris, 1969). Very good succinct surveys will be found in the *New Cambridge Modern History*, volumes 2, 3 and 4 (Cambridge, 1958-70), by I. A. MacGregor and J. B. Harrison. The fullest recent account of the Portuguese empire to 1580 is Bailey W. Diffie and George D. Winius, *Foundations of the Portuguese Empire, 1415-1580* (Minneapolis, 1977). The theme of my own monograph, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat: The Response to the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley and New Delhi, 1976) is summed up in its title. A. R. Disney's recent valuable monograph, *Twilight of the Pepper Empire: Portuguese Trade in Southwest India in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978) has good detail on the pepper trade. K. S. Mathew's recent *Portuguese Trade with India in the Sixteenth Century* (New Delhi, 1983) contains copious information on the early sixteenth century pepper trade.

J. C. Van Leur's Asia-centric analysis of Indian Ocean trade, and of the Portuguese, is in the collection of his writings called *Indonesian Trade and Society* (The Hague, 1955). M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofsz in *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague, 1962) not only criticizes Van Leur, she also provides an excellent detailed account of Asian trade in this period, focused on southeast Asia. The debate is continued by Niels Steensgaard in *The Asian Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago, 1974). He supports Van Leur, and also provides a provocative analysis of the Portuguese empire in Asia, and the differences between them and the later Dutch and English. W. H. Moreland's *India at the Death of Akbar: An Economic Study* (London, 1920) is still useful for a sketch of the Indian economy at 1600, while Ashin Das Gupta's 'The Maritime Merchant, c. 1500-1800' (Presidential Address, Indian History Congress, 1974, Section II, Medieval India) provides a bird's-eye view of its subject. Several of the chapters in my *Coastal Western India: Studies from the Portuguese Records* (New Delhi, 1981) relate to the subjects covered in this chapter.

John Correia-Afonso (ed.), *Indo-Portuguese History: Sources and Problems* (Bombay, 1981) provides an excellent introduction to this field of study. It includes articles by two innovative European scholars, G. Bouchon and L. F. Thomaz. Other examples of their work will be found in *Archipel,* no. 18, 1979, and in the forthcoming *Proceedings of the Second International Seminar on Indo-Portuguese History*. The proceedings of the third of these seminars, again containing many invaluable articles, was edited by Teotonio R. de Souza and published as *Indo-Portuguese History: Old Issues, New Questions* (New Delhi, 1985). Much important research appeared in the occasional journal *Mare Luso- Indicum,* edited by Jean Aubin, 4 volumes, 1971-80. Now, unfortunately, it is subsumed in *Moyen Orient and Ocean Indien* (Paris, 1984-). The basic journal for Portuguese colonial history is *Studia* (Lisbon), which began publication in 1958. An essential tool is Henry Sholberg's *Bibliography of Goa and the Portuguese in India* (New Delhi, 1982).

5

India and the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century

S. Arasaratnam

In presenting an overview of the trade of the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century, I have built on the foundation of the work of a number of historians who have written on this subject over the past fifty years. These years have seen a mounting body of work which can now be conveniently drawn together to present a composite picture. In putting these pieces together, I have been influenced very much by my own perceptions of the trade and traffic of the ocean resulting from my investigations into those parts that have interested me over the years. At one end of our continuum of scholars stands W. H. Moreland, the great pioneer of studies on India's commercial history, whose works appeared in the 1920s. Almost fifty years later, there appeared the great syncretic work of Holden Furber, published in 1976, which brought together the knowledge that has been accumulated over that period reinforced by his own substantial contributions. A number of problems of sources, methodology and interpretation that faced the early scholars are still with us. Advances have been made, however, from the first tentative efforts of Moreland to quantitatively and qualitatively describe the foreign trade of India. A number of specialist studies of trading regions have appeared: Gujarat, Malabar, Coromandel, Bengal, Sri Lanka. What is presented in this chapter is largely a drawing together of this growing literature, an assessment of the importance of what is known about one region for another and a discussion of the revisionist nature of this knowledge in our present state of historiography.

Some of the problems relating to our investigation of commerce in the Indian Ocean have to be identified, before I go on to an outline of the present state of knowledge. Firstly, what are the sources for our study and what are the problems they present? A variety of contemporary material, originating largely from the European traders, warriors and travellers in the Indian Ocean and its shores, contain important evidence on shipping and commerce of the ocean and its ports. Many of our historians have relied on those parts of this material that have been published and it is useful to remember that there is a vast quantity that lay unpublished in the repositories of a number of countries. The bulk of the published material, which has been used by historians of commerce, consists of travel literature, diaries and journals of sailors and merchants. While such publications occur in a number of languages, English, Dutch, French, Portuguese and German, the Hakluyt Society and the Linschoten Vereeniging may be mentioned as containing the largest number of editions useful to our purpose. Then there are the published records of the Companies, of which, for the seventeenth century, the *English Factory Records* series and the *Dag Registers* of Batavia may be singled out as the most useful.

To the investigator, getting beyond the level of published material to the records of the Companies and of the Portuguese Crown enterprise, the sky is the limit. In these despatches between officials of the Company and of the Crown, shipping lists, invoices, memoirs, market reports, contracts, price lists, annual accounts lay a heap of data invaluable for the reconstruction of what went on in port and market, in ship and on the high seas. The closer the researcher has got to this raw data of the merchant and officer in the port and the market place, the more rounded has been his picture of what went on.

While all this material can justifiably be considered a treasure-trove, they can also have their hidden traps. They record the observations of diverse European participants in the commercial world of Asia and are therefore stronger on the European side of commercial enterprise. The observations of an official or a traveller on matters other than his immediate interest are often cryptic and episodic and should be used with the utmost caution. They represent the picture as it was at the time it was being observed and, in terms of trade or market conditions, cannot be used to construct a coherent pattern of activity. Cumulative evidence of this sort, however, over period of time, may be used to suggest a pattern. The report of the officials tends to be more valuable than the account of a traveller in that it is less episodic and represents observation over a longer period of time. But again one has to be cautious not to take a fact that is true in the short-term and give it a long-term significance, unless this is validated by such descriptions over a lengthy period of time. From this point of view records kept by officials of the Companies who have served in their factories for long tenures confidentially written to their supervisors have proved the most useful.

Among the most reliable pieces of evidence are the records of the movement of ships, of prices, lists of commodities, contracts with brokers and, above all, of lists of shipping entering and leaving a port. The more of this we can accumulate for ports in a region, the more we are on firm ground on the trade of that region. A number of regional studies of trade since the 1950's have utilized these records in the Portuguese, Dutch, English, Danish and French repositories. It is obvious that this data is most ample and most accurate for the activities and movement in and near the major centres of European trade and administration. For those regions of Asian trade lying at a distance from these European enclaves, these records are of the least value and should be recognized as such. Where the data pertains to important entrepôts where Asian and European trade met, it is of great significance and should be used critically. Examples of such places on the Indian subcontinent are Surat, Hooghly and Masulipatnam which were important centres of Indian oceanic trade and where a number of European trading agencies had their offices. The reports and statistics compiled by these officers are among our most fruitful sources for the Indian Ocean trade.

Among such records, specific mention may be made of lists of Asian shipping kept in these and some other ports by officers of the Dutch East India Company. In some of our recent studies, these lists have been used with great profit but also with due caution. They are not necessarily exhaustive, being the result of personal observation and close liaison with customs officials of the port administration which was not always possible. The Dutch lists seem to record only the ships of substantially larger size and ignore the small craft in which most of the sailing was done even to longer distances in the becalmed months. We must be aware of the danger of indulging in a quantification exercise on the basis of this data and proceeding to draw conclusions from the figures, assuming that they are all-inclusive.

All the evidence thus accumulated is but the tip of the iceberg. There was a great deal of activity going on in the maritime world of Asia outside the vision and the concern of the European merchant. The ports which the Europeans saw were by no means the only places of seafaring activity. In coasts such as Malabar, Coromandel, Gingely, there was no single major entrepôt but a number of equally favoured ports of call. There is no way of assessing, with any degree of accuracy, the volume of shipping in these places and the trends in the seventeenth century. One is left to speculate from stray references and make informed guesses on impressions gained from a total reading of the evidence.

Any evidence collected from the Indian ports would also be supplemented by evidence in the regions across the ocean with which India was trading. This was a blind side to much of our study of Indian Ocean trade. It is now recognized that very important, suggestive evidence could be gained from these end-points of Indian trading voyage. This includes evidence from the wide rim of the Indian Ocean and beyond: the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, east African ports, Sri Lanka, Maldive Islands, the Burmese coast, southern and eastern Thailand, the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, Java, the Moluccas and the Philippines. Quite often, what is missing from our sources on the Indian end can be supplied by a suggestive fact in any one of these areas. A major problem is our methodology which requires a rigorous and critical approach to the sources. The sources are Eurocentric. If we are to avoid our description becoming a catalogue of European activities in the ocean, we have to look to the small print, to get behind the major recorded action of the European, to pull out a trivial fact mentioned *obiter dicta* by our observers and attribute to it an importance in answering the questions we have posed for ourselves.

In the following pages, I am attempting a sketch of the trade of the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century. As the Indian Ocean as an area of trade does not exist independent of countries whose shores it washes, and as among such countries the Indian subcontinent occupied a central position both strategically and economically, I have chosen to describe this trade from the vantage point of India. I thus declare at the outset the Indocentrism of my approach.

There are two distinct systems of trade that could be distinguished. There was the oceanic trade, proceeding from a number of major and sometimes minor ports from all over the subcontinent across the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea to many destinations on the opposite shores of these two parts of the Indian Ocean. Secondly, there was the trade along the west and east coast of India, the furthest distances of which were almost as long as an oceanic voyage. The oceanic trade was carried out in larger vessels, seasonal, speculative and embraced the produce of India and of the end-points of this trade, as well as the transhipment of goods of other regions with Indian ports being used as transit points. It was carried out by powerful entrepreneurs, owning shipping fleets, or by a number of small scale operators, misleadingly called pedlars in our literature, owning or freighting a vessel for their trade.

It was bilateral, direct voyages to a specific port and back, and multilateral, round trips taking in a number of ports in a specific region. The coastal trade was highly variable in size, ranging from large scale operations, comparable to oceanic voyages, from one end of northwestern India to the opposite end of northeastern India (i.e. Gujarat to Bengal), to long and short hauls to any one or more points along the west and east coasts. In this type could be included the busy trade to the island of Sri Lanka. These sailings were conducted through a greater part of the year, avoiding only the heavy monsoon months on either coast. There was a great deal in common between the two systems of trade, in participants, commodities and voyages. Transoceanic voyages ended up as coastal sailings and what began as sailings along the coast then make the oceanic crossing.

The Situation at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century

Sindh

The extent of the trade on the northwestern extreme of the subcontinent is unclear, but it was significant enough to attract the attention of the English and the Dutch, within a few years of their establishment in Surat. The major port was Lahari Bandar at the mouth of the river Indus, and this port fed the market of Tatta, the regional capital further upstream. The main items of trade were textiles drawn from the weaving centres of the villages of Sindh and indigo, but there were also a variety of other commodities of export, mainly food grains, especially wheat. Articles of import were those sold in most Indian markets: metals, pepper, spices, luxury consumer goods from west Asia. Much of the trade was linked up with the Gujarat ports of Cambay, Diu and Surat carried on in coasting vessels. A significant part of the trade also moved westwards along the coast to Hormuz and Muscat. The connection with Hormuz appears to have been particularly-well established. Food grains, textiles and indigo were exported to Persia in return mainly for silver laris of Persia. Also some of the Gujarati west Asian voyages seem to have touched on Lahari Bandar on the way.

Moreland asserts, largely from the evidence of early English merchants sailing in that region, that the trade of Sindh at the beginning of the seventeenth century was dominated by the Portuguese who had a factory at Lahari Bandar. The question arises here of what is meant by domination of trade. Was it, as Moreland implies, a monopoly of the entire carrying trade, or was it, as the evidence in the region generally suggests, a domination of the sea routes and an extraction of tribute form trade? Certainly the Portuguese were in a position to dominate the roads of the mouth of the Indus river from their fortified and well-manned settlement in Diu. Can it be assumed that Portuguese domination went further than forcing indigenous merchants to procure their *cartazes,* as they did in many other parts of the ocean? That they did not monopolize the trade is seen in the available evidence of ships calling at Hormuz in the first decades of the seventeenth century. In 1623, 54 ships are recorded as having called at Hormuz from the Gujarat and Sindh ports of which eight were from the 'mouth of the Indus'.[1] There is no doubt, however, that the Portuguese themselves carried on a lucrative trade from Lahari Bandar. They had a large establishment there and strenuously resisted English and Dutch attempts to settle a factory and burnt down a trading post the English had put up. There must have been a brisk trade carried on by Indians under Portuguese protection and by Portuguese themselves. The trade faced westwards and southwards to the neighbouring entrepôts of Cambay/Surat and Hormuz. It was significant enough to attract European rivalry, but this did not affect the indigenous merchant elements and their participation.

Gujarat

Of all the trading regions of India, we have the clearest picture of Gujarat. This is not necessarily because it was the region of trade of the highest volume—though this is arguable—but because it was a region of high visibility. It was visible because of its Mughal connections, its westward links with the Muslim world and, not least, because it attracted the first intense European competition at the beginning of the seventeenth century. An obvious reason for the importance of Gujarat was that its ports were at the confluence of a number of trading systems. These ports linked the oceanic, interregional trade of Asia with the coastal and subcontinental trade of India. The port of Cambay, about which Tome Pires had enthused at the beginning of the preceding century, had now been superseded by the neighbouring port of Surat. The Mughal conquest of Gujarat and its integration into the imperial administration widened the hinterland of the Gujarat ports, especially Surat, which became a major import and export market for a wide expanse of the Indo-Gangetic plains and western India.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Indian trade from all ports of the region, was paying protection costs to the Portuguese in recognition of their power on the seas. The Portuguese themselves had ports of their own—Diu, Daman, Bassein and Chaul from which (especially Diu) flowed a significant amount of Portuguese and Indian trade. Indian merchants controlled by far the largest proportion of this trade and were engaged in partnerships, of one sort or another, with Portuguese seafarers. Portuguese control of the seas and hence their ability to demand tribute from Indian trade was declining gradually in the first decade of the seventeenth century and more rapidly thereafter with the challenge of the English and the Dutch.

The presence of the Portuguese contributed to the expansion of trade from Surat and the other ports. Through the links with the Portuguese ports of Goa and Diu, the trade of Gujarat became interlocked with world trade. It extended beyond its traditional links with west Asia and southeast Asia, to east Asia, through Portuguese Macao, and to the west European trade through tapping and feeding Portuguese east-west trade at Goa. The great Portuguese northward convoys of 300 to 400 ships from Goa to Diu which had earlier touched at Cambay now did business at Surat which became the chief distributive point for this trade. The great dependence of the Surat merchants on this trade is seen in the opposition encountered by the English and the Dutch in establishing themselves in Surat.

As far as oceanic trade was concerned, the major links of Gujarat were with the ports of the Red Sea, southern Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Here again, particularly in the trade to the Persian Gulf, Portuguese protection was important. Under this protection, trade between Surat and Hormuz grew in the sixteenth century.

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[1] Report of the Dutch Opperkoopman Hubert Visnich. Cited in Steensgaard (1973) p. 197.

There were regular annual convoys in the beginning of the seventeenth century. There were similar convoys to the southern Arabian port of Muscat and to ports of the Red Sea. Aden had been important for a large part of the sixteenth century till it was superseded by Mocha and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Gujarati vessels were sailing to Mocha and further up the Red Sea to Jiddah. This was an expanding trade at this time, fostered by religious links and the great urge to perform the *hajj* pilgrimage by devout north Indian Muslims. Trade and religious fervour fed each other, large ships were constructed for this route, capable of taking hundreds of passengers each of whom carried a quantity of goods to trade at both ends of the journey. The interlocking of religious and commercial objectives boosted this particular sector of India's overseas trade.

Of Gujarat's trade with the east African ports there is not much evidence and the prevailing view is that the Arabs of Hadramaut provided the link between Gujarat and east Africa. There is, however, some recurring Portuguese evidence to indicate direct Gujarati sailings to Malindi, Mombasa, Kilwa and other east African ports both by Muslim and Hindu merchants.[2] The Portuguese control over these ports would have facilitated joint ventures and provided protection.

Gujarat's links with southeast Asia were also important, though tending to be eclipsed by the growth of the westward trade. There is hence a temptation in our historiography to devalue the scale of this trade and to antedate its decline. In the period of the sultanate of Malacca, Gujarat had been a staple trading area in contact with that port. This link was cut with the Portuguese conquest of Malacca (1511) and did not revive, despite Portuguese inducements towards this end in the second half of the sixteenth century. Gujarati traders established links with other Malayan and archipelago ports such as Acheh, Johor, Kedah, Jambi, Grise and Bantam. Of these, trade contacts with Acheh and Bantam were particularly strong at the beginning of the seventeenth century. There were settlements of Gujarati merchant agencies in both these ports and they had considerable influence in the political systems and administrations of these and neighbouring states.[3] Surat was a major port for the transhipment of southeast Asian spices to the Red Sea and thence to the Mediterranean. The trade to southeast Asia was carried out with Portuguese passes and in defiance of Portuguese controls, which were never really effective in respect of the trade of the eastern part of the Indian Ocean.

A third area of Gujarat's trade was the coastal trade southwards to the ports of Canara, Malabar and then eastwards to Coromandel and Golconda. This was a fast-flowing trade of great diversity, ranging from boats sailing short distances to country ports, to longer voyages to major ports such as Goa, Calicut, Nagapatnam and Masulipatnam. A major function of this trade was the collection of goods at Surat for transhipment westwards, the most prominent of which were pepper and textiles. In the shorter sailings to Canara there was movement of a great deal of food grains and redistribution of goods imported into Surat.

The merchant communities who participated in this trade came from Surat and its satellite ports and from the Portuguese settlements. There were indigenous communities who had converted to Islam, such as Khojas and Bohras, who were prominent in the trade of Surat. Hindu and Jain Banias featured in the oceanic as well as the coastal trade and were settled in Surat, Broach, and in the Portuguese settlements. Some expatriate Muslims from west Asia had settled in Surat as prominent merchants. There was as yet no large scale involvement of Mughal officials in trade, which was to come later in the century. Parsi and Armenian trade was also a later phenomenon. Portuguese trade was conducted on behalf of the Crown and private trade by officials and Indo-Portuguese entrepreneurs. Portuguese share of the trade of Gujarat was small; most of the trade was carried on by Indians domiciled in the region.

South of Gujarat, in the ports of the Konkani and Canara coasts, trade was not as brisk and voluminous as in Gujarat. There were some ports with a fair amount of trade flowing southwards and northwards to the large centres. Besides the Portuguese ports of Goa and Chaul along this coast, there were other ports of importance to oceanic trade which seemed to wax and wane at different periods. The hinterland rulers, the sultan of Bijapur and the nayak of Ikkeri favoured the trade. The region was a rice bowl to deficit areas in the north and the south. The port of Dabhol had once been important in oceanic trade, both to west Asia and to southeast Asia. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, ships from Dahbol were sailing to Hormuz, Mocha, Acheh and Bantam. Other ports of any significance were Vingurla, Karwar and Rajapur where trade fluctuated depending on the political condition of the hinterland. Further south on the Canara coast were three ports, Onore, Barcelore and Mangalore. These drew from the rice and pepper producing hinterlands. The Portuguese had a controlling position over all three ports with strategically constructed forts from the 1570s. This control was weakening in the first decades of the seventeenth century. The merchants of these regions were Bijapur Muslims and Konkani Hindus who functioned primarily as suppliers to the powerful merchants to the north. Some of them sailed on their own westwards, southwards and to the east coast of India.

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[2] N. Chittick, 'Indian Relations with East Africa before the Arrival of the Portugese', *International Conference on Indian Ocean Studies*, Section III, pp. 3-4, 7-8.

[3] M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago* (The Hague, 1962), pp. 243-44.

Malabar

The strong links of Malabar with oceanic trade routes prior to the arrival of the Portuguese had been loosened in the course of the sixteenth century. Strategically located to play a prominent role in the east-west trade and producing pepper and some spices, vital commodities in the trade, the Malabar coast had enjoyed a prominent position in the Asian maritime world. Malabar became the chief seat of Portuguese power and this had serious consequences to the trade of the region. This concentration of Portuguese power had resulted in part in a northward shift of the confluence of oceanic trade routes. By the seventeenth century, Malabar ports had lost their entrepôt character and their trade consisted primarily in the export of the produce of the land. Pepper, was the major export which was consumed throughout India and exported to west Asian markets. Cardamom and wild cinnamon had a good export market in west Asia. Other export commodities were coconut palm products — copra, coir and yarn — areca nuts, piece-goods and cowries which were brought from the Indian Ocean islands. Imports included a variety of consumer goods of which the most voluminous were rice and minerals.

The Portuguese had major stronghold in the ancient port of Cochin and also controlled the ports of Quilon, Cranganore and Cannanore through forts. Portuguese seapower had been pretty effective along this coast and coastal rulers and traders recognized it and had learnt to live and trade under its protection. The power and its recognition were, however, on the wane at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Malabar rulers who had retained their independence, such as the Zamorin of Calicut, the raja of Travancore and the merchant-prince, Ali Raja of Cannanore, were re-emerging as strong trading powers. They had succeeded in drawing much of the trade away from Cochin, which declined towards the end of the sixteenth century. Correspondingly, Calicut saw a revival of trade to the north and northwest. Likewise, in Cannanore, the Moplah merchants, who had been a constant thorn in the Portuguese side, had emerged to control the largest share of the pepper trade and even sold pepper to the Portuguese. Their trade northwards to Gujarat, northwestwards to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, southwards to the Maldive Islands and Sri Lanka, eastwards to the Coromandel and into southeast Asia was being carried on with and without Portuguese *cartazes*.

Little is known of the identity of the seagoing merchants of Malabar apart from the Moplahs who, with some Muslim expatriate merchant communities, probably dominated the trade. There is some evidence of the presence of Malabar Hindu merchants, mostly of the Chetty caste and also some Nairs. Most of the coastal trade towards Cape Comorin and Coromandel seems to have been in their hands. Chetty and Muslim merchants of the Tamil lands also sailed into Malabar and had their agents in the Malabar ports. Most of the oceanic trade seems, however, to have been in the hands of the Moplahs.

Coromandel

As we move eastwards, our evidence of trade proceeding from indigenous ports gets scantier, we have to rely on imaginative reconstruction from earlier and later evidence. The absence of large scale Portuguese involvement in Coromandel has meant that their records do not say as much about this area as they do in western India. Further, the absence of one or two major entrepôts of trade here made it difficult for central observation of the trade from any one position of vantage. The trade of Coromandel was carried out from a number of ports all over the coast. It was not favoured with a natural harbour nor were there navigable rivers at whose confluence large entrepôts could develop. Communication through land depended very much on the political and military condition which towards the end of the sixteenth century was volatile with declining imperial authority of Vijayanagar.

In north Coromandel, there was the rise of Masulipatnam to some position of significance in oceanic trade, favoured by its Islamic links with the Persian Gulf. But it did not take on an entrepôt role similar to Surat in relation to Coromandel's exports and imports. There is evidence of the parallel growth of other ports even in north Coromandel and of many in the south. Masulipatnam never served as a port for south Coromandel. Part of the reason for this absence of the growth of central ports was the nature of the trade itself. It was primarily an export trade in textiles whose production was scattered over the region. The import trade was never of any great significance, except at Masulipatnam, consisting mainly in minerals and the local movement of rice and other foodstuff. The major activity of the overseas merchants was the procuring of textiles for export.

Over the years a number of ports are seen as outlets for trade, some prominent at one time, some at another. Proceeding from the south northwards they are: Tondi, Adirampatnam, Nagapatnam, Nagore, Karikal, Tranquebar, Tirumulaivasal, Porto Novo/Cuddalore, Tegenampatnam, Pondicherry, Sadraspatnam, Kovilam, Mylapore/San Thome, Madras, Pulicat, Armagon, Petapuli, Masulipatnam, Palikollu, Kakanada, Vizakhapatnam and Bimlipatnam. There is evidence that ships sailed out of these ports on oceanic and coastal voyages at some time or the other in the seventeenth century. Each of these ports had weaving villages in its hinterland and this export of textiles alone was enough to sustain the trade. The markets for Coromandel cloth were spread over a wide region of Asia: Burmese and Thai kingdoms, sultanates of the Malay peninsula, north and east Sumatra, Java, the Moluccas, the Persian Gulf and south Arabia. Besides the oceanic trade there was considerable coastal trade northwards up to Orissa and Bengal, southwards to Sri Lanka and westwards to Malabar and Gujarat.

A major problem in securing a picture of the trade of Coromandel at the beginning of the seventeenth century is to assess the role and significance of the Portuguese in that trade. Moreland has asserted that the Portuguese secured dominant position in the carrying trade of Coromandel. Following him, some later historians have proceeded on that assumption and drawn their conclusions from it. The Portuguese were politically dominant on the pearl fishery coast of the inner Madura bay. They had a political presence in the port of Nagapatnam, a major port of southern Coromandel and had a settlement in the neighbourhood of the old port of Mylapore which they called San Thome. In neither place were they in a position to dominate trade and their control over the seas was sporadic. They were in a position to disrupt shipping whenever their armed vessels came into these waters but their presence was not as effective as on the west coast. They derived protection costs from the merchants of Nagapatnam through *cartazes* which they distributed. Merchants sailing to Malacca and the Malacca Straits secured these passes but the sailings to Acheh, Kedah, Pegu, Arakan and other places went on without interruption from the Portuguese. There was some Indo-Portuguese partnership in the trade to Malacca. The traditional, age-old trade to southeast Asia continued uninterrupted to Malacca, the Burmese and Thai coasts, west Malayan ports and to Acheh and Bantam. The assumption that the Portuguese controlled a large share of the oceanic trade of Coromandel seems unwarranted.[4]

The rise of the kingdom of Golconda in the Andhra coast and hinterland made Masulipatnam an important regional entrepôt. Masulipatnam's trade with Bengal, Burma, Malaya and Sumatra grew. The biggest growth was in its westward trade with the Persian Gulf. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Golconda's trade with the ports of the Persian Gulf was thriving, these traders touching at Surat on the way. The import trade of Masulipatnam was the largest in the region because it fed the kingdom of Golconda by land route through Deccan to the capital city, the seat of the wealthy Islamic ruling class.

The merchants of the Coromandel coast were spread out all along the coast. Muslim settlers from west Asia and local Islamic merchant communities traded side-by-side with old and long-standing Hindu merchant groups. The extant literature tends to underestimate the role of Hindus in seafaring but a careful reading of the evidence shows them still operating well into the seventeenth century. At the beginning of the

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[4] This point of view is based on the evidence of south Indian (Kling) mercantile presence in many parts of southeast Asia in the first decades of the seventeenth century. Meilink-Roelofsz (1961) has assembled much of this evidence, see especially pp. 121, 171, 240, 243, 247.

seventeenth century, we see them active in various ports of the archipelago and mainland southeast Asia. We see them playing an important part in the trade of Malacca when it revived in the second half of the sixteenth century. 'Klings' of Coromandel were influential in Malacca society and administration and even in the governments of some of the trading kingdoms of the archipelago.[5] The Hindu seaborne traders were Telugu and Tamil Chetty who had an old tradition in seaborne trade. The intrusion of Islamic power into north Coromandel may have affected the activities of the Telugu Chetties and we see more of them moving southwards towards Pulicat and the later port of Madras and competing with Tamil Chetties in their traditional preserves. Other miscellaneous fishing castes, such as the Paravas, were also traders, primarily coastal traders. The domiciled Muslim community of south Coromandel and Madura were also a powerful factor in overseas trade. They are sometimes called Chulias and, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, were sailing to all parts of southeast Asia where they had minor settlements and a great deal of influence in the administration of these kingdoms.

Bengal

The evidence of the trade of Bengal at the beginning of the seventeenth century is even less than for Coromandel. In the period of the sultanate of Malacca, Bengal was one of the major regions trading with that entrepôt. There is no reason to assume that this was cut off in the course of the sixteenth century. Bengal's traditional trade connections were with southeast Asia with the kingdoms of Burma, the Malay peninsula and Sumatra. Satgaon and Chittagong had been Bengal's two major ports in the sixteenth century. Later we see the rise of Hooghly and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, this port along with Pipli and Balasore are the major ports of oceanic trade. The settlement of Portuguese traders in large numbers in Hooghly, Chittagong and some islands of the delta seem to have brought Bengal into the Portuguese trading system. The Portuguese had a fort and a large market city strategically located on the Hooghly river. Their naval power, largely of adventurous, freebooting marines, was pretty effective in the waters of Bengal and north Burma. They collected customs duties and protection costs from all Bengal shipping.

It is assumed by some of our historians that the Portuguese had engrossed the entire trade of Bengal to themselves. This seems to be an overstatement of the position. What is more likely is that trade was carried on under Portuguese protection. The evidence of large sums collected in customs from Hooghly would seem to support this. It would also tally with what we know of Portuguese policies to trade in other areas. It could be assumed that Bengal traders sailed to Portuguese ports such as Malacca, Cochin, Goa and the ports of Sri Lanka. There must surely have been trade with the Burmese coast. There was certainly a close link between Bengal and Masulipatnam as Bengal goods were available there to be transhipped to Surat and west Asia. Bengal rice would have had its traditional markets in Coromandel and Sri Lanka.

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[5] Meilink-Roelofsz (1961) pp. 121, 171, 240.

As many of the Portuguese in Bengal were freebooters and their actions verged on piracy, this would have had an unsettling effect on Bengali trade. There was further the piracy by the seas of the Maghs of the Arakan coast. The king of Arakan was in constant conflict with the Portuguese, the Mughals and with other Bengal princelings. All this created a climate in which seaborne trade could have declined in the last years of the sixteenth century. When the Portuguese were driven out of Hooghly in 1632, and the Mughals brought the delta under imperial administration, trade soon revived.

Bengal Muslim merchants were a major force in the trade of the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century. They seem to have been constituted from powerful expatriate merchants of west Asia and possibly Surat and Golconda who settled there. There must also have been old domiciled Islamic groups, converts from Hindu seafaring castes, who were entrenched in trade. There is very little evidence of Bengal Hindu seafaring until later in the seventeenth century and it is held that these were largely migrants from western India. It is not known what happened to the traditional Bengali Hindu merchants. All this leaves a number of unanswered questions on the nature of the trade of Bengal at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

One of the factors that strikes us forcefully is the strength in numbers and the wide distribution of merchants operating from various regions of India. These are of diverse ethnic and linguistic origins and are drawn from both the main religions of India—Muslim and Hindu. It is generally assumed that Muslims dominated overseas trade but this should not blind us to the continuing substantial presence of Hindu merchants. In terms of volume, Muslims probably had the edge on Hindus. Both groups were very plural within themselves. Muslims consisted of thoroughly Indianized and domiciled settler groups noted in particular areas and expatriate Turks, Arab and Persian who were in the process of being domiciled. Hindus were from many language-cultures and many castes. There were those among Gujarati Hindu Banias and Coromandel Chetties who could vie with the wealthiest of the Muslims in the scale and breadth of their operations. There were a number of others—Jains, Konkanis, Canarese, Nairs, Paravas—who continued seaborne traffic. We should guard against the tendency in our literature to ignore Hindu seafaring sooner than its time.

Another factor that emerges, and this is one in which the most recent literature is agreed, is that Portuguese naval domination did little damage in the long run to Asian oceanic trade. On the other hand, it may have given it a boost by providing it protection, introducing a new demand and extending its contacts. Once this is realized, we begin to look on the developments of the seventeenth century in a new light and draw conclusions somewhat different from those of Moreland fifty years ago. In all the regions in the Indian subcontinent, there was active trade at the beginning of the seventeenth century, both under the Portuguese and very substantially outside. A good deal of what appeared to contemporary observers as Portuguese trade was later seen to be Indian and Asian trade carried on under Portuguese cover.

Development of Trade in the Seventeenth Century

Gujarat and Northwestern India

In northwestern India, one of the major features of this period was the growth in the entrepôt character of Surat and a consequent devaluation of other ports in the neighbourhood to a position of its satellites and feeder ports. Thus ports of varying degrees of importance such as Diu, Broach, Chaul, Dabhol and others declined in their participation in oceanic trade, losing much of this to Surat. This was the result of a number of factors such as the decline of the Portuguese, the entry into the trade of the English and the Dutch, deliberate Mughal policy of the development of Surat as an outstanding emporium, and the further growth of the trade from western India to west Asia as a major phenomenon of this period. These factors operated at various times and had major effects on Indian Ocean trade and should be considered in detail.

Surat's role as the major port of outlet for oceanic trade in this region meant that the major export commodities, cotton piece-goods and indigo, had to be brought into Surat from neighbouring ports. Thus Surat became the chief wholesale market for textiles. This is seen in the failure of attempts by European traders to establish factories in neighbouring ports such as Broach. Similarly, in respect of import goods, Surat was the chief distributing point for such goods along the coast and into the interior. It played a similar role for the re-export of goods not produced in this region. The chief among these was pepper which came to Surat along the west coast from Canara and Malabar where a few Surat merchants had control of the market. Of similar nature was the role played by Surat as a redistributing point for southeast Asian goods, spices and tin but this was a role that was to decline after the 1620's for reasons to be noted later.

The decline of Portuguese seapower in the western Indian Ocean and the gradual loss of many of their settlements along the west coast of India gave an initial fillip to Indian trade. Ports under Indian jurisdiction whose trade had paid protection costs and customs dues to the Portuguese were now freed of these costs. This liberation of Indian trade had its effects in an increase in the volume of trade to the Persian Gulf and southern Arabia. In the Persian Gulf, Indian ships could avoid Hormuz and sail direct into Gulf ports such as Basra or Bandar Abbas (Gombroon). When the Portuguese lost Hormuz in 1622, the traffic to the Persian Gulf became completely free and Indian merchants of Gujarat took full advantage of this freedom.

The capture of Hormuz by the Persians in alliance with the English in 1622 had important effects on the trade of the western Indian Ocean and particularly on the trade links between Surat and the Persian Gulf. The immediate effect was to transfer the trade from Hormuz to Bandar Abbas on the Persian mainland under the supervision of Persian officials and with direct links by caravan routes to the interior. Bandar Abbas soon emerged as a port of international status and somewhat later the inner Gulf port of Basra also grew in importance. Besides freeing traders from the protection costs imposed by the Portuguese, it liberated them from corrupt and inefficient Portuguese customs officials. A further effect of the fall of Hormuz was the entry of the two Companies, English and Dutch, into this trade. Their participation contributed to the growth of commercial enterprise in the western Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century and especially the Dutch in middle decades were making large investments in this trade. It also contributed to the growth of Indian trade in this region, through extensive freighting of goods in English and Dutch vessels. Most of this trade flowed out of Surat.

In the course of its rise as an entrepôt of the area, Surat developed links with almost every major and minor regional trading system. Its domination over other ports of Gujarat and the Indus mouth has been already noted. These other ports were relegated to satellite status. It was said that *kafilas* of up to 500 ships would sail from Cochin northwards to Goa, Daman, Chaul and Diu bringing Malabar goods to the northern ports. These Portuguese protected *kafilas* had declined to 20 or 30 in number by the 1630s and most of this trade had been attracted to Surat. Malabar coast ports such as Calicut now traded directly with Surat which became an important distribution point for Malabar pepper, cardamom and cinnamon. Similarly, Canara and Konkan ports such as Mangalore, Rajapur, Vingurla and Dabhol (which, however, continued its oceanic trade for much longer) had direct and regular links with Surat, supplying it with rice and pepper and purchasing their imports from that port.

On the east coast, a major development was the extension of the old coastal trade which ran from Coromandel up to Malabar further northwards to Surat. Here the growth of Masulipatnam under the Golconda rulers and the attraction there of immigrant Islamic entrepreneurs who had links with Surat was a major factor. The Masulipatnam-Surat link grew and flourished through a great part of the seventeenth century as a staple of Indian Ocean trade. By this means, Coromandel textiles were taken to Surat to be transhipped to west Asia. Also Bengal sugar and muslins, southeast Asian tin and spices, precious stones and steel from Deccan went by this route to Surat. From Surat cotton yarn, west Asian goods and gold and silver were imported into eastern India. In the early part of the century, Masulipatnam was the channel for Bengal goods to Surat. But after the Mughal conquest of Hooghly and the destruction of Portuguese naval domination of the Gangetic delta waters, direct sailings were carried out from Surat to Bengal ports. They began with outward sailings from Surat but soon became a two-way trade by the second half of the century, with sailings initiated from Surat and from Bengal.

Among the various sectors of Surat's trade, the one that saw the greatest growth in the seventeenth century was the trade westwards to the ports of the Red Sea, southern Arabia and the Persian Gulf. A number of factors assisted this growth. Surat became the port of outlet for the vast Indo-Gangetic plains and western Deccan. The sea route largely replaced the caravan routes through northwestern passes which had been an outlet for some of the trade of northern India. The increasingly intense participation of the Mughal royalty and nobility in this westward trade gave it political and the financial backing which enabled established merchant groups to take advantage. Mughal investment in the form of liquid capital and of shipbuilding went initially into this sector of the trade. The provision of an administrative infrastructure benefitted all trade.

The political and economic support in turn attracted wealthy and powerful merchant families from the Islamic states of west Asia who settled in Surat with their capital assets. It came at a time when the Arabian peninsula had been disturbed by Turkish intrusion, Turkish-Persian conflict and internecine warfare. In Persia itself the consolidation of power by the Safavids was a fillip to trade and helped the forging of strong links between the Gulf ports and Surat. As the trade was always balanced in India's favour, the returns consisted of large quantities of gold and silver which was a great attraction. Commercial motives were strengthened by cultural factors, the pilgrim traffic and the contact with Islamic lands was an added incentive. Larger and larger ships were being constructed right till the end of the seventeenth century to take in this traffic, sometimes without proper regard to safety and technical considerations.

Into the thriving indigenous Asian trading system came the northern Europeans who quickly saw the importance of this trade cycle. Their entry further fed the trade with capital and, more importantly, with shipping and navigation technology which here, as in other areas of Asian trade, served to broaden and strengthen trade.

The flow of this trade was a continuing phenomenon in the seventeenth century, with some ups and downs caused by political and economic factors. The general long-term trend was one of expansion. The trade, which had settled down under the Portuguese in the preceding century and was now on a course of quiet growth, was threatened by external factors in the first decades of the seventeenth century. The entry of the English and the Dutch and their quarrels with the Portuguese prosecuted in the waters of northwestern India and southern Arabia unsettled the trade and caught the Indian merchants of Surat in the middle of this conflict. Merchants, who had sailed the sea waters with Portuguese passes, now found themselves attacked for carrying the passes. They also began to feel the initial impact of the competition of these Europeans, particularly the English, in their Surat and Red Sea markets. Surat merchants initially tended to favour the Portuguese, and took some time to become aware of the significance of the coming of the northern Europeans. Right up to the 1630's, when the Dutch and the English were challenging the naval power of the Portuguese, Indian merchants had to perform a balancing act between these powers, not knowing whose protection to accept. When it became clear that the Dutch and the English were the new naval powers of the Indian Ocean, these merchants quickly adjusted themselves and accepted their protection.

The new controls were far less overpowering than the old ones. The Dutch, by far the stronger naval power, were concentrating their energies in the Indonesian archipelago. The new threat was, however, of a different sort. It was competitive in respect of markets and investment, and Indians found themselves engaged in a far more acute competition with the new European traders than anything they had faced from the Portuguese. In this, however, they were in their elements and pulled out all the old arts of their trade to survive and eventually beat this competition, certainly in respect of the trade westwards into Arabia and Persia. The trade was intensely competitive from the 1620's to the end of the century. In Mocha and Jiddah, in Bandar Abbas and Basra, Surat merchants were able to survive the competition and retain a major share of the market for Indian imports till the end of the century. In the ports of the Persian Gulf, Bandar Abbas and Basra, the competition from the English and the Dutch was intense for some years. But even here, Surat merchants and other Indian merchants more than held their own.

In west Asia as a whole, the Dutch and the English withdrew a number of their factories in the second half of the seventeenth century. They concentrated on freight traffic, carrying goods for Indian merchants from Indian ports to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. The English began doing this early and the Dutch, who were reluctant to enter the freight traffic, were forced to do so from time to time to employ their shipping space economically. Even in respect of freight traffic, the Mughals, realizing the potential of the westward trade, financed the building of ships till the 1660's. This reduced Indian dependence on foreign vessels but also made them vulnerable to attack at sea.

Surat shipping was now and then subject to attack in the seventeenth century in the course of European conflicts with Indian rulers to win concessions or redress alleged wrongs. English attacks on Surat shipping at the mouth of the Red Sea in the first decade of the seventeenth century, forced the Mughals to admit the English to trade in Gujarat. Again in 1623, the English attacked Gujarati shipping in retaliation for losses they suffered on land. The Dutch had the potential to do greater damage to Indian shipping on the Indian Ocean and did engage in more frequent hostile actions against Indian ships to attain their aims. They attacked Indian ships carrying Portuguese passes as part of their struggle against the Portuguese. The militancy in the pursuit of trade monopoly initiated under Jan Pietersz Coen was extended into the Indian Ocean but conditions on the coast and its hinterland did not favour the aggressive policies being successfully pursued in the archipelago.

The hostile action of 1621-23 in the western Indian Ocean as well as along the Golconda coast had resulted in unforeseen reprisals from local powers, the Mughals, the sultan of Golconda and the Pasha of Yemen. The next phase of Dutch hostilities in western India came in 1648-49 in an effort to control Indian shipping to southeast Asia. In these years, they blockaded Surat and captured prize vessels to force the Mughals into accepting their pass restrictions on trade to southeast Asia. From the 1670's, Surat shipping was troubled by European piracy. English and French freebooters found Surat shipping coming out of the Red Sea lucrative targets and the Mughals became more reliant on European naval escorts. In the Mughal-English conflict of the 1680's, Surat's trade to the Red Sea was greatly disrupted and a number of vessels captured. While these interruptions underlined the vulnerability of Indian shipping and emphasized the European potential to dominate shipping routes, in the long term they merely pushed up the costs of protection without major changes in the flow of trade. Even after a century of such operations, Surat merchants' domination of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf markets was untouched by the Companies. What was beginning to affect this, however, was the entry of private English enterprise into this trade from the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

In one respect, European enterprise affected adversely the trade of Surat. This related to the control asserted by the Dutch over the spices of Indonesia, for which Surat had previouly been a point of transhipment to west Asia. As the Dutch hold on these spices—nutmeg, cloves, mace, cinnamon (from Sri Lanka)—tightened, Surat merchants were unable to ship them to west Asia. The Dutch took them in their own ships and kept the price at Surat so high that it was not profitable for anyone else to carry them to west Asia. The merchants soon adjusted themselves to the loss of these commodities from their trade.

Surat also traded with southeast Asia. This aspect of trade has been underestimated in our historical literature and its decline has been antedated. The voyages were longer and therefore less frequent than those to west Asia and were only undertaken by the larger operators. But it was an important part of the trade of Gujarat. At the beginning of the century Gujarati ships were the major carriers of southeast Asian spices to the Indian and west Asian markets. Gujarati factors operated in a number of southeast Asian ports well into the seventeenth century. Gujarat–Acheh trade was very important throughout this period. They took Gujarati textiles, wheat and rice and brought back spices, pepper, tin, elephants and gold. This connection was strengthened progressively by political and diplomatic ties between the Mughals and the rulers of Acheh and some religious links. Besides Surat, the port of Dabhol continued to trade with Acheh till mid-seventeenth century. As Bantam rose to prominence in the course of the century, Gujarati trade was attracted there, and again trade links were strengthened by political ties. Gujaratis continued to feature in the administration of ports and of the trading states of the archipelago. They used their factors and their political bases to trade into the archipelago, to Javanese ports, Macassar, and Moluccas until the Dutch domination of these ports and islands.[6]

On the Malay peninsula, Gujarati traders avoided Malacca, despite Portuguese attempts to entice them there. They sailed direct to the tin producing states of Perak and Kedah and to Johor after its rise as a trading kingdom. Though they did sail further north to Tenasserim and the Arakan ports, these sailings were neither regular not substantial.

The current view in our literature is that this Gujarat trade to southeast Asia was rooted out by Dutch expansion in these waters and by Dutch and English competition in markets where Gujaratis traded. The expansion of the trade westwards is further held to be a result of this cutting off of the eastern connection. A close look at the trade in Acheh, Bantam, Johor, Perak and Kedah, right up to the end of the seventeenth century, shows that Gujarati trade with these places continued throughout this period. It is true that Gujarati ships no longer carried the fine spices and thus lost out on a lucrative aspect of the trade. But the trade in commodities of volume — pepper, tin, elephants, textiles, rice, wheat, opium — continued till the end of the century. This trade was not knocked out by English and Dutch competition. In the major markets of Acheh and Bantam, Gujarati textiles were carried largely by Gujaratis themselves, whether in their own ships or in European vessels. The defeat of Bantam by the Dutch in 1682 was a major blow to this trade and in the last decades of the seventeenth century, Dutch military control was closing in on these markets. It was only then that Gujarati trade to southeast Asia began to be phased out.

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[6] Evidence for these assertions to be found in *Dag Register Gehouden in't Casteel Batavia* ('S-Gravenhage) May 1642, October 1642, May 1644, November 1645, September 1663, July 1678, May 1679, September 1679, May 1680, July 1681. Also See, S. Arasaratnam, 'Some Notes on the Dutch in Malacca and the Indo-Malayan Trade 1641-1670',—*Journal of Southeast Asian History,* X, 3 (Dec 1969), pp. 485-89.

It is sometimes held that, through the issue of passes to southeast Asia, the Dutch controlled Gujarati sailings to that region. It is true that the naval blockade of Surat in 1648/49 forced the Mughals to an agreement by which they acquiesced in Dutch regulation of this traffic through passes. But these passes were freely given to Acheh and Bantam and only controlled as far as Malacca, Perak and Kedah were concerned. In Malacca and Kedah, Gujarati shippers accepted the rather high toll of twenty per cent imposed by Dutch customs. The trade continued and was in effective competition with the Dutch despite these tolls. Later in the century, Gujarati ships secured English and French passes, even flew English colours and were often piloted by English navigators. So the passes policy, while it added to the costs of trade and gave the Dutch an advantage in some markets, never had the effect of curtailing Indian sailing.[7]

Gujarati trade entered the Manila market from the 1660s, largely on the initiative of the English who provided the shipping, the navigation expertise and the contacts, and the Gujaratis the capital and the goods. This Anglo-Indian collaboration in the Manila trade expanded from Bombay with Parsi interests entering it in a big way and from there extending their connections to the China trade. There is also some evidence that Gujaratis based in Bantam traded with Manila on their own or in league with Coromandel Muslims and with Bantam merchants. Gujarati and other Indian merchants received quantities of silver from Manila in Bantam as a result of this trade.[8]

It is difficult to say whether this trade in southeast Asia grew, as we can say categorically about the trade to west Asia. There is enough evidence to assert that it did not decline. On the contrary, new links were being forged, old links were maintained and strengthened. When the trade did show signs of decline at the very end of the seventeenth century, it was caused by the collapse of the great trading kingdoms such as Bantam and Acheh. It is clear that the Companies did not drive out Gujaratis from their eastern trade. The greater competition, when it did come, was from the English private merchants and this began to bite only in the eighteenth century.

Surat was pre-eminent in the seventeenth century in respect of the trade skirting the west and east coasts of India. The trade along the west coast continued with greater strength from the preceding century. The decline of the Portuguese in this trade benefitted the Gujaratis whose ports now became the terminal points of this trade. Surat strengthened its connections with the Bijapore ports of Vingurla and Rajapur and to the south the old ties with Mangalore, Calicut, Cannanore and other Malabar ports were maintained. With the decline of Portuguese hold on the pepper-producing states of Malabar, Surat merchants dominated the pepper exports. Surat became the major exporting point for Malabar pepper to west Asia.

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[7] *Dag Register*, 12 May 1680.*Generale Missiven* . . uitgegeven door Dr. W. Ph. Coolhaas Deel, IV, 1675-1685 ('S-Gravenhage,1971), pp. 232-33. P. Van Dam, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie.* Tweede Boek Deel III, uitgegeven door Dr. F. W. Stapel ('S-Gravenhage, 1939), p. 24.

[8] *Dag Register*, 4 April 1676, 18 January 1677, 12 May 1680. S. D. Quiason, *English 'Country' Trade with the Philippines 1644-1765* (Quezon City, 1966), pp. 36-42.

On the east coast of India, Surat had a strong trading connection with Masulipatnam. Through this link western Indian and west Asian goods were brought to Masulipatnam and from there Coromandel and Bengal goods were taken to Surat. Later direct links were forged between Surat and Bengal, a major growth area in the seaborne trade of India. Bengal silks, muslins, sugar, rice, other food grains and edible oils were imported into Surat, much of this for re-export to west Asia. In return, goods of many regions were brought to Bengal. When the seaborne trade of Bengal started growing from mid-seventeenth century, many of the merchants of Bengal were said to be of western Indian origin.

Malabar

The trends towards recovery of Malabar trade, after the lethal blows it had suffered from the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century, continued into the seventeenth. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, there was a good deal of competition for the pepper and spices of Malabar. The entry into the market of the Dutch and the English stimulated the demand further and put the exporting states of Malabar in a favourable position. Malabar ports had re-established their previous connections with west Asian markets. All this enhanced the importance of those ports outside the jurisdiction of the Portuguese. Calicut had re-emerged in oceanic trade and the Moplahs from near Cannanore had continued their overseas trade with only a brief interruption.

To match the revived trade of these Malabar states, their naval strength also showed an increased vigour. Both in uncoordinated freebooting activities in the Malabar waters and in direct challenges to Portuguese naval power, these navies won some significant victories in the first decades of the seventeenth century.[9] Later, with the Dutch navy confronting the Portuguese and conducting regular blockades of Portuguese ports during the trading season in the 1630's and 1640's, Malabar seafarers were completely free to carry on their oceanic sailings. This gave a boost to the Malabar–west Asia trade. Malabar merchants shipped pepper, cardamom and cinnamon to Mocha and Muscat, as well as to Basra. This trade was mainly in the hands of the merchant-prince, Ali Raja of Cannanore. The Zamorin of Calicut threw open his ports and his territories for their trade, notwithstanding a treaty signed with the Dutch in 1626 giving them exclusive rights to his pepper trade.

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[9] *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, Vol. IV (London, 1905), pp. 22-23.

The conquest by the Dutch of the Portuguese ports of Cochin, Cranganore, Cannanore and Quilon in the 1660s temporarily threatened this trade. The Dutch, following their policy towards spice producing states, entered into exclusive contracts with almost all pepper producing states of the coast. But given the thriving demand northwards in Surat and westwards in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf ports, these contracts were soon a deadletter. The Dutch set up a system of coast guards and passes but Malabar merchants had ingenious ways of evading these controls. Malabar shippers, Surat merchants, the English and the Portuguese (from Goa) were able to carry large quantities of pepper throughout this period. Malabar merchants shipped pepper direct to west Asia throughout the century. Imports into Malabar consisted of spices from Indonesia, cotton, textiles and opium from Surat, rice from the northern ports, Coromandel and Bengal and textiles from Coromandel. The Indonesian spices had been monopolized by the Dutch but their policy of fixing prices at high levels depressed sales. In respect of other imports, merchants from Surat, Konkan, Coromandel and Malabar and the English competed successfully with the Dutch.

An important part of the trade of Malabar was the coastal trade southeastwards to Madura, Sri Lanka and Coromandel. This trade took in a variety of commodities of daily use. Besides pepper, Malabar exported coconuts and coconut products, areca nuts, timber, sea produce and imported cotton textiles, tobacco, rice and other foodstuff. This trade, which was carried on in small one and two masted vessels by Muslim and Hindu traders living all along this coast, had gone on undisturbed right through the period of Portuguese domination, even though their hold over those parts of the coastline embraced by this trade was strong. It was rudely disturbed by the Dutch who sought to control a large part of this trade. This led to a number of situations of conflict with states along the coast–the Nayaks of Tanjore and Madura, the Thevar of Ramnad, the queen of Attingal and the raja of Travancore. It was an attempt by the Company to enter what was essentially a petty peddling trade and was eventually abandoned as impractical.

Malabar merchants traded directly with the Maldive Islands, bringing the produce of these islands to Malabar ports for re-export. The trade was traditionally dominated by the Moplah Muslims of Cannanore. Cowry shells, Maldive fish and coconut products were the major exports of the Maldives which imported their food and clothing requirements through Malabar merchants. Though later in the century Bengal merchants made direct sailings to the Maldives—Bengal being a major importer of cowries—Malabar continued as the major link of the Maldives with Indian Ocean trade. The Dutch attempted direct voyages to the Maldives but these were soon abandoned. Maldivians themselves made annual sailings to Sri Lanka, with which island they had some traditional political ties, and from where they derived some of their necessities.

Malabar is a clear example of the ineffectiveness of wielding power over the trade of the Indian Ocean. Both under the Portuguese and under the Dutch, large military establishments located along this coast achieved little. Ports outside European control, Calicut, Cannanore, Ponani, Tellichery, Tanur, Porca, Anjengo, continued to be outlets of Malabar trade in the seventeenth century. Rulers such as the Zamorin of Calicut, Ali Raja of Cannanore, queen of Attingal and the raja of Travancore kept Malabari interest in oceanic trade alive. The English, and later the French, proved catalysts of indigenous trade, helping to push export prices up and assisting in the challenge to exclusive claims of the Portuguese and the Dutch. At the end of the seventeenth century, there was an upsurge in the trade of Malabar caused partly by the decline of Dutch naval power in these waters and the expansion of English Company and private trade in collaboration with Indian traders from Surat and Malabar. The major Dutch port of Cochin had declined totally in its volume of trade and Calicut to the north and Travancore to the south were increasing their share of oceanic trade. The fall of Bantam in 1682 and the closure of the pepper markets there to European competitors of the Dutch gave a greater prominence to Malabar. These competitors now converged on Malabar and those rulers took advantage of the opportunity.[10]

Coromandel

As indicated earlier, the oceanic trade flowing out of Coromandel was not concentrated on one or two ports but was carried out from a number of ports scattered throughout the coast which rose and fell in importance, depending largely on the politics of the hinterland. In the seventeenth century, a large number of ports on the Coromandel traded eastwards with southeast Asia and westwards to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Coromandel shared in the boom in Asian trade of the seventeenth century. This boom had created a greater demand for Coromandel textiles in many parts of maritime Asia. New markets had been opened up both by Europeans and their Asian competitors. In this export drive, Indian merchants played an active part and more than held their own in the highly competitive markets of southeast Asia.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Masulipatnam had become an important entrepôt, primarily of the trade to west Asia. Its most influential link was with the Persian Gulf. Ships from that port also left for the Red Sea ports, ports of Arakan, Tenasserim, the Malay peninsula and Acheh. Major shipbuilding centres a few miles to its north—Madapollam and Narsapore constantly supplied ships for this port. The kings of Golconda and the nobility actively participated in this trade. They owned ships and invested in goods. Masulipatnam was the port which fed the extensive kingdom whose interior capital city of Golconda was a great market for imported goods. The affluent and powerful Islamic nobility secured its consumer goods through this port, largely from west Asia. Elephants were an important article of import from southeast Asia, for use in the Golconda army and as draught animals. Textiles drawn from the weaving villages of Andhra were the chief export. Indigo, steel and diamonds from the mines of Golconda were also exported. All this helped in a degree of centralization of trade in Masulipatnam that went on till the Mughal conquest of the kingdom unsettled the hinterland and plunged the port into a succession of administrative crises and law and order problems.

By far the bulk of Coromandel's overseas trade went eastwards to various ports of southeast Asia. During the period that the Portuguese held Malacca, much of this trade, especially from south Coromandel ports, went to Malacca. In Malacca, the traders were able to sell their textiles and purchase a variety of goods ranging from spices to Chinese and Japanese imports. Hindu merchants featured prominently in this trade and Hindu shipping concentrated on this route. Klings, as the Portuguese called them, held influential positions in Malacca and the Portuguese were dependent on them in commercial matters. The ships were given passes by the Portuguese at Nagapatnam and San Thome (Mylapore), which had been important Hindu ports long before the arrival of the Portuguese and sailed under Portuguese protection for the first three decades of the century.

The entry of the Dutch-Portuguese struggle into the Bay of Bengal affected this trade and for a time Coromandel shipping under Portuguese protection was subject to harassment by the Dutch. When this happened, the merchants turned away from Portuguese ports and sailed out of Indian ports such as Pulicat Tegenampatnam, Sadraspatnam and Cuddalore, securing Dutch and English passes. With the Dutch conquest of Malacca in 1641, this shipping moved away from Portuguese protection and relied on English, Dutch and Danish protection. The Dutch conquest of Malacca interruped the Coromandel–Malacca trade for a period and adversely affected Hindu and Muslim shipping of Coromandel. When the trade was resumed under Dutch protection, it was hedged in with a host of restrictive regulations and high tariffs (climbing to 20 per cent on imports and exports).[11] This added to the costs of this trade and reduced its volume in the second half of the seventeenth century. Nonetheless, so important had this traditional trade route been that it continued till the end of the century and merchants persisted with it despite the costs of tariffs and of Dutch passes.

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[10] For a frank confession of the ineffectiveness of Dutch control of Malabar trade, see *Memoir by Hendrik Adriaan van Rheede* (Madras, 1911), pp. 29-33.

[11] *Dag Register*. 23 October 1678.

A marked trend of the trade to southeast Asia in the sixteenth century had been the diversion of trade to places within the archipelago and the Malay peninsula. The extent to which Indian traders sailed through the Malacca Straits eastwards to Java and the Moluccas has not been clear. There is no doubt, that such trade was carried on. Coromandel merchants had factors and agents in the main southeast Asian ports of Malacca, Acheh, Bantam and Jambi from where they carried on voyages into the islands of the archipelago. In the sixteenth century, with the Portuguese domination of the Malacca Straits, many Coromandel traders, especially Muslims, avoided Malacca and traded with ports on the Malay peninsula and with Acheh. Acheh rose as a terminal point of Indian trade to rival Malacca and Hindu and Muslim traders from Coromandel sailed there, just as the Gujaratis were doing. Throughout the seventeenth century, Acheh remained a favourite port of call for Coromandel shipping. Acheh became a prime distribution centre for Coromandel textiles which were widely used in Java, Sumatra, Malaya and the islands. From Acheh these ships brought back spices, till the Dutch imposed a total monopoly on them in the 1650s, pepper, tin, elephants and gold. With the imposition of a high tariff in Malacca, more ships were diverted to Acheh, a trade which the Dutch attempted to control with passes from the Indian end, but with little success.[12]

The increasing Dutch control over the trade of Malacca made the Coromandel merchants penetrate the Malay sultanates to the north and south of this port. Coromandel traders frequented the states of Kedah and Perak to the north of Malacca and of Johor to the south. These three states continued as major terminal points of Coromandel trade throughout the seventeenth century, despite Dutch efforts to restrict the sailings to these places by passes. In all these states, Coromandel textiles sold well; other commodities of import were opium, indigo and steel. On the return journey, the ships brought back pepper, tin and elephants, all of which had a good market in Coromandel. The elephant trade in particular was so profitable that it was said that the merchants were able to sell textiles below cost and still profit on the round trip. This was important because the second half of the seventeenth century saw an intense competition for the textile markets of southeast Asia. By the end of the century, so deeply had these merchants penetrated the trade of these states that some of them held prominent positions in the central administrations of Johor, Kedah and Perak.[13]

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[12] Abundant evidence of Coromandel shipping movements to Acheh in *Dag Register* of 1640 to 1680. See for example December 1644, September 1645, April 1648, 12 April 1653, 29 January 1661, 28 November 1661, 22 May 1663, 3 September 1663, 5 December 1663, 8 March 1665.

[13] Barbara Andaya, 'The Indian "Saudagar Raja" in Traditional Malay Courts', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,* Vol. LI, pt. I (1978), pp. 21-28.

With the rise of Bantam in the seventeenth century, Coromandel shipping proceeded to that port. Hindu and Muslim merchants had agents in Bantam and maintained good relationships with the sultan and his administration. They also used Bantam as a base from which they conducted voyages into the archipelago. So voluminous were their imports that the market was constantly oversupplied with Coromandel cloth, seriously affecting Dutch trade even in Batavia. To circumvent Dutch naval control and regulations, this trade was undertaken with European partnership—English and Danish—and even under the flags of these nations. The Danes in particular, whose trade based in Tranquebar proceeded in desultory fashion throughout this period, tried to revive their fortunes by freighting goods of Hindu and Muslim merchants. After the 1650s, they had four large ships sailing from Coromandel to Bantam, each carrying sometimes over 100 Coromandel merchants and up to 800 packs of cloth belonging to these merchants. Porto Novo, Nagapatnam, Tranquebar, Tegenampatnam and Madras were the major ports of departure of this trade. In spite of persistent efforts, the Dutch could not restrict the volume of this traffic. The attempt to control it through the issue of passes by Dutch officials in Coromandel was of no avail.[14]

The Coromandel trade to mainland southeast Asia—the Burmese kingdoms of Arakan and Ava, the kingdom of Ayuthia and its dependencies—has been underestimated in our literature. In the absence of information on its scope in the sixteenth century, it is difficult to assert that it grew in the next century. But there is enough evidence to show an intense competition in the trade of these ports in this period. Indian shipping sailed there from many ports—Surat, Dabhol, Goa, Diu, Calicut, Masulipatnam, south Coromandel ports, ports of Bengal—but Coromandel traders seem to have enjoyed a large share of this trade. Coromandel Muslims had settled in numbers in these ports where some held high administrative office. In the kingdom of Arakan the ruler was an aggressive trader and had a large navy. He encouraged trade in his ports and Coromandel traders made regular sailings there. The chief imports were textiles and pepper and exports included rice and slaves. Rather more substantial was the trade to the ports of Pegu in the kingdom of Ava which was fed by a richer hinterland and by river traffic up the Irrawady. Textiles were the chief import. Coromandel merchants had agents in Syriam and Martaban, the two major ports. Further to the south the province of Tenasserim, a dependency of the rulers of Ayuthia, saw the most voluminous trade. This trade was not only terminal at the chief port of Mergui but also transit over the narrow isthmus to the Gulf of Siam, to Ayuthia and on to Cambodian ports.[15]

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[14] *Generale Missiven,* Deel IV, pp. 11-12, 18, 471, 473.

[15] *Generale Missiven,* Deel I, p. 297, 409-10, 591 and many others. G. V. Smith, The *Dutch in Seventeenth Century Thailand,* (Detroit 1974), pp. 85-87.

The trade to Thailand from India, and particularly from Coromandel, was a sector of growth in the seventeenth century. It was well established when the Dutch entered it in the 1630s and they were up against intensive competition from the Coromandel Hindu and Muslim traders. From the Dutch evidence there is seen an expansion in Indian trade to Thailand from the 1640s, an expansion which served to drive the European out of this trade in thirty years.[16] It could be that European competition in traditional markets of Indian trade spurred the shippers to diversify their sailings. In the Thai trade, Indians exported Coromandel textiles and imported Thai elephants which sold well in India as well as securing Chinese and Japanese goods that were brought there. In this way they received Japanese copper, the import of which into India was otherwise dominated by the Dutch. Some Coromandel Muslims are reported as having sent trial shipments to Cochin China and Japan, in partnership with Chinese Muslim traders who came to Ayuthia. It is not known whether this led to the establishment of a regular trade.[17]

The trade to mainland southeast Asia remained an Indian preserve till the end of the century. The Dutch and English after some efforts to penetrate it, closed down their factories. Both companies then carried freight goods on this route for the Indians, as also did the Danes. Masuliptnam, Pulicat, Madras, Tegenampatnam, Porto Novo, Tranquebar and Nagapatnam were the ports from which this trade was carried out.

Another area of growth in Coromandel's eastward trade was the trade to Manila. Like Gujarati entry into this trade, the trade from Coromandel was also an Anglo-Indian venture. Names of prominent Coromandel Chetty and Muslim merchants featured in this trade which was conducted in their ships and with their capital. The Luso-Indian community living in Madras gave them the contacts with the Spanish administration in Manila.[18]

The trade in southeast Asia was not all initiated from Coromandel. Rulers of Arakan and Ayuthia had ships sailing to Coromandel ports as also did the sultans of Kedah and Johor. Quite often these ventures were organized and managed by Coromandel merchants who had permanent interests in these states. At other times, goods were consigned to well-known Coromandel merchants. The rulers had links with Coromandel officials who would then give every facility to the incoming vessels and their *nakhodas*.

Coastal trade from Bengal in the north to Tanjore in the south was a constant phenomenon except for the very difficult months of the northeast monsoon. Foodstuff, especially rice, was constantly passing up and down, from surplus to deficit areas. Bengal and Orissa to the north and Tanjore to the south exported rice to the middle coastal areas. In the early part of the century, before Bengal was fully opened to inter-Asian trade, much of Bengal's produce passed through Coromandel ports especially Masulipatnam. After the opening of direct connections between Bengal and Surat, this medial role of Coromandel was reduced. The trade to Sri Lanka was part of the coastal trade carried on in similar vessels. The export consisted of textiles, rice, salt, dried fish, and imports were elephants, areca nuts, pepper, cinnamon (before Dutch monopoly) and coconuts. The trade was carried on by Hindu and Muslim merchants living in south Coromandel and Madura ports.

This coastal trade was unaffected by the European presence, except in stimulating demand for food grains in their coastal settlements. Only in times of naval warfare between these powers, or action against one of the coastal states was the trade unsettled. The Coromandel–Sri Lanka trade was, however, seriously affected by Dutch policy in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Their attempts to monopolize the trade in textiles, cinnamon and areca nuts unsettled the market and drastically reduced the volume of trade.

Bengal

The evidence from Bengal is very Portuguese-centred and, based on this, historians have drawn the conclusion that the trade of Bengal was dominated, if not monopolized, by the Portuguese. This haziness continues into the first three decades of the seventeenth century. Other Europeans, whose evidence has been so useful for the trade of the other regions, kept away from Bengal, being wary of the reputed entrenchment of the Portuguese in Hooghly and Chittagong. The Dutch and the English received reports in their Coromandel factories of the good potential of Bengal trade. Much of the Bengal trade flowed to Portuguese ports of Malacca, San Thome, Nagapatnam, Colombo and Cochin, both in Portuguese vessels and in Bengali vessels with Portuguese passes. Bengali traders seem to have sailed to these ports and to other places such as Masulipatnam, Arakan, Pegu and possibly Acheh.

With the weakening of Portuguese naval power in the first decades of the seventeenth century, it may be assumed that the indigenous merchants of Bengal grew out of the Portuguese protective umbrella and began trading independently to the major Asian ports. At this time Bengal trade grew to Acheh, Kedah, Johor and ports in southeast Asia other than Malacca. With the destruction of Portuguese power in Hooghly and its passing under Mughal administration, Bengal trade was completely liberated from Portuguese dominance. From then on Hooghly, Pipli and Balasore developed as the major ports of Bengal's oceanic trade.

The expansion of the overseas trade of Bengal was assisted by a number of factors. In the first place, there was the expansion and consolidation Mughal power into the Bengal *subah* and eastwards up to the frontiers of Arakan. With the capture of the port of Chittagong, some order was brought into the waters and inlets of the delta. Arakan, Magh and Portuguese piracy was suppressed and trade was centralized in a few ports, regulated by a system of tariffs and port administration. Secondly, the produce of Bengal had an increased demand in other regions. New markets were found, such as raw silk in Japan, sugar in west Asia, and rice and other foodstuffs in the growing European settlements and other food deficit areas. Thirdly, these opportunities appear to have given a boost to merchant enterprise. Bengal attracted migrant merchants from western India. Finally, as in other parts of India, Mughal nobility and members of the Bengal, Orissa and Oudh administrations participated actively in trade from the 1640's. They invested in shipbuilding which saw a boom from about that time. They owned a number of ships that sailed the major oceanic routes. This participation in trade went on till the 1680's.

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[16] G. V. Smith, (1974), p. 62, *Dag Register*, 11 December 1661, 11 May 1663.

[17] *Dag Register*, 13 June 1661, 17 November 1661.

[18] Quiason, (1966), pp. 34-53.

The largest volume of Bengal's trade was directed towards southeast Asia, to the Indonesian archipelago, Malay peninsula and the Burmese and Thai coasts. This trade is seen to boom from the 1640's. The connection with Acheh was particularly strong which became a major market for Bengal foods. Muslins and cotton goods of Bengal were in great demand in Acheh. Bengal also supplied rice, butter, vegetable oils and salt petre. On their return merchants took back pepper, spices, tin, elephants and gold. The elephant trade was extremely profitable. Bengal's trade to Malacca declined after the Dutch conquest. Instead Bengali ships were diverted to Kedah and Johor. As in the case of Gujarat and Coromandel, the Dutch sought to control this trade through passes. The success was even less, as powerful political interests were behind this trade and nawabs, *shahbandars* and other officials kept pressing them for passes which they could not well refuse.[19]

Bengal's trade to Arakan, Pegu, Tenasserim and thence to Ayuthia was also important. It was a short, safe voyage and several round trips were made per year. The export commodities were textiles, silk, sugar, salt petre, opium, foodstuff and in return were brought tin, elephants, precious stones and gold, When Indian trade to Manila was begun, Bengali merchants also participated in it. For a long time Europeans did not try to compete with Bengali merchants in their traditional markets. In that sense, they faced less direct competition than those of Gujarat and Coromandel.

The trade southwards along the east coast also showed an increase. The demand for Bengal's food grains and edible oils increased rapidly. These goods were now carried directly in Bengali ships which sailed to a number of ports in Coromandel. Of particular importance was the trade to Sri Lanka. Bengali rice ships became a lifeline of the island's food supply and there was also a market for coarse textiles. In return the ships brought back elephants, cinnamon, areca nuts, chanks and cowries. Ships of the nawab and the officials regularly plied this route. Some ships sailed direct to Sri Lanka and back, others touched at the port of Galle *en route* to Malabar or the Maldives. The ships to Malabar and Maldives took rice and a variety of foodstuffs, textiles and sugar and brought back pepper, spices, areca nuts, cowries and coconut produce.

A new development of this century was the direct trade between Bengal and Surat, but this was largely in the hands of Surat merchants. Bengali silks, muslins, sugar and opium were taken back for consumption in western India and on transit to west Asia. There was little or no direct sailing from Bengal to the ports of west Asia. Bengal received from Surat cotton, certain types of cotton goods, tobacco, pepper and spices (originating in Malabar), coffee and a variety of goods of west Asian origin. As the westward trade from Surat grew in the seventeenth century, so did the Surat—Bengal trade. This trade too did not have to face European competition and till the end of the century continued in the hands of Surat merchants and their Bengal agents.

An Overview and an Assessment of Trade in the Seventeenth Century

Moreland, in his pioneering study of India's trade in the seventeenth century, cautiously took the view that India's overseas trade during this period was at best stationary and that, in any case, it lost a large share to the Europeans who had come into the trade. This view is contrary to the major thrust of the description offered above which has implicitly and explicitly presented a picture of growth and of successful competition against the Europeans. After Moreland's writings, we have in more recent times been favoured with specialized regional studies of Gujarat, the Persian Gulf, Malabar, Sri Lanka and neighbouring waters, Coromandel, Bengal, Malaya and Indonesia. In these studies, evidence has been presented which extend our knowledge of the process of trade from where Moreland left it and in important respects provide a corrective to the assumptions on which he had based some of this conclusions. It appears that a basic and initial flaw in his reasoning was his assumption that the Portuguese had engrossed a large share of the carrying trade of India. It has now been shown by studies of Gujarat, Goa, Malabar, Hormuz and Malacca that most of the trade carried on under Portuguese protection was Indian and that the Portuguese merely skimmed the surface of Indian Ocean trade. Proceeding from there, it also appears that Moreland exaggerated the English and especially the Dutch share in the Indian Ocean trade and the extent to which they had intruded into markets dominated by Asians. His hypothesis of a progressive decline of Indian carrying trade in the seventeenth century must be revised. The decline, when it did come in the last decades of the century, was regional and caused not by European competition, as Moreland asserts, but by a variety of regional political and economic factors that have to be studied individually.

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[19] *Dag Register,* 31 Oct. 1641, Dec. 1644, November 1645, 29 November 1661, 22 May 1663, 3 September 1663, 13 December 1663. Om Prakash, 'Asian Trade and European Impact: A Study of the Trade from Bengal 1630-1720' in (B. B. Kling and M. N. Pearson (ed.), *The Age of Partnership* (Honolulu, 1979), pp. 50-60.

This, however, is not to underestimate the influence of European participation in the Indian Ocean trade. The Dutch, English, Danes and later the French were aggressive traders and mercantilists. They undertook armed aggression on the ocean to turn the terms of trade in their favour. Fortunately for freedom of trade, such interference in the Indian Ocean proper was sporadic, mostly initiated by the Dutch. Dutch aggression was primarily directed against the Portuguese whom they succeeded in coastal Sri Lanka, parts of Malabar and the southern tip of Coromandel. Another type of aggression was that against major ports, either blockades or direct attacks on shipping. This was engaged in by all powers for a variety of reasons. Many did it to receive permission to trade or to redeem an alleged wrong. The Dutch did it to force compliance with contracts and restrictive regulations.

The most effective form of aggression that left its impact on Indian Ocean trade was Dutch monopoly over the spices of the Moluccas and Sri Lanka. After the Dutch conquest of the spice islands of the Moluccas and of Sri Lanka, nutmeg, clove, mace and cinnamon became an effective Dutch monopoly. Merchants had to buy them at fixed prices from Dutch factories. These prices were kept at a level that would make it unprofitable to ship them to Europe either by the Cape route or through west Asia. This had the effect of depriving Indians of the carrying trade in spices from east to west. It also vastly increased the price of these commodities in Asia and resulted in a decline in consumption and a frenzied search for alternate sources of supply. The fact that this did not seriously endanger the volume of Asian traffic shows that these spices were only a minor part of Asian trade.

The provision of protection was an increasingly important factor in Asian trade in the seventeenth century. In the sixteenth century the Portuguese had claimed hegemony over the major routes of the ocean. In the first few decades of the seventeenth century, this was challenged by the Dutch and the English. Asian shipping was caught between these giants of the ocean fighting for supremacy but came out of it in a better position with a diversity of protection in place of one. Through the middle decades the Dutch were the supreme naval power and their passes were necessary to sail the ocean, especially its eastern part. A price to be paid for this protection was to fall in with their restrictive regulations and pay their tariffs. Merchants learnt to live with this till the last quarter of the century when the English and the French were on the ascendant. The merchants could then use one European nation against the other and even flew English and Danish colours to avoid Dutch reprisals. Very seldom was Dutch passes policy effective as an instrument to control the flow of goods across the ocean.

After the contest for the freedom of traffic on the Indian Ocean between the Portuguese and the Dutch and the Portuguese and the English was settled in favour of the two northern European powers, European rivalry, when it did occur in the Indian Ocean, was of no great hindrance to the trade of the ocean. The three Anglo-Dutch wars were not markedly extended into the Indian Ocean except the third (1672-74) which saw one sharp naval action off the Golconda coast. The 'Persian Squadron' of the French which sailed into the Indian Ocean in 1671 did cause some disturbances to trade on the Coromandel coast between 1672 and 1674, when the French seized the Golconda port of San Thome. The Dutch laid siege to the port by sea and the Golconda army by land and the French surrendered in 1674. As a result of this show of force, the French were able to secure a trading settlement in Pondicherry from the ruler of Bijapur where they founded a factory in 1674. They established factories in other trading regions and began an erratic and insufficiently supported trade in the ocean, largely held together by enterprising Company officers such as Francois Martin and Francois Baron.

A factor of continuing growth in this period was the trade between Asia and Europe. Textiles took precedence over all other goods in the exports to Europe and this enhanced the role of the Indian subcontinent. The demand for the European market was highly specialized and did not seriously interfere with the demands of Asian trade. Where Europeans competed for goods for the Asian market, it did contribute to pushing up prices but Indian merchants more than held their own. European investment was primarily for the European market and the Dutch orders for the European and Asian market were in the proportion of three to one. Cinnamon from Sri Lanka, pepper from Malabar, indigo, raw cotton, Bengal and Persian silk, salt petre and Arabian coffee were other exports from this region. European imports consisted primarily of bullion, though in the latter part of the century, the demand for European minerals such as lead, zinc and copper was increasing.

European impact on the trade within Asia was on the whole formidable. It did not change the major routes of Indian Ocean trade in any drastic manner or the patterns of trade. The trade of the western part of the Indian Ocean, embracing the various regions of India, the ports of the Red Sea, southern Arabia and the Persian Gulf, the islands of Sri Lanka and the Maldives went on substantially as before. There is evidence of growth in the westward traffic to the Red Sea ports, a growth helped by the competition of the English and the Dutch. On the eastern side of the ocean there were some significant changes, caused mainly by the assertion of effective Dutch control over the Straits of Malacca and the markets of the archipelago. This unsettled India's eastward trade which was denied free access to the eastern islands and the markets of Java. The trade seems to have quickly adjusted to this handicap, shifting its routes and making effective use of European rivalry. The restriction of trade to the archipelago seems also to have led to an increase in traffic to the Malay peninsula and Thailand. These were certainly areas of growth, as was the trade to Manila.

Of all the direct European inputs into the trade, none was so catalytic as the input of silver. This massive drain of silver *into* India in the seventeenth century served to lubricate commerce and must have been instrumental in stretching the productive capacity of the country to its limits. To this was added the silver that came in from South America via the Manila trade. Only second in importance to this injection of capital was the increase in shipping space contributed to trade by the Europeans. In the course of the century, the provision of freight traffic became their important function. This combined with their navigational skills which they made available to Asian shippers by serving them as pilots and captains of vessels served to enlarge the capacities of Asian trade.

Though all Europeans contributed to the expansion of Asian trade, the role played by the English is noteworthy. From the outset, the English decided to work in collaboration with Asian trading interests rather than confront them. This decision was based on their relative weakness and shortage of capital. They drove a brisk freight traffic to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, to Acheh, Bantam and the Burmese coast. Through their Portuguese allies, the English gave Indians access to the Manila market. English Company servants traded privately in collaboration with Indian merchants.

Though the Companies, from the outset, traded in competition with Asian merchants in the major markets, they never dominated those markets to the extent of driving Asian shippers out of the trade. Contrary to Moreland's views, they never took any great proportion of the trade away from Asian merchants. It is only when these markets were subject to European political power, such as in the Moluccas, Macassar or Bantam, that the Asians were kept away from there. Towards the end of the century, more than Companies, the elements that really began eating into traditional preserves of Asian merchants were Europeans trading in a private capacity—Company servants and free merchants owning their own ships or utilizing Company freight ships who entered the trade at the turn of the century and in the same goods. It was from this type of trade that the competition was to come in the succeeding century, in Bengal, Coromandel, Malabar and southeast Asian markets.

There is no doubt that the decline of Indian commercial traffic across the Indian Ocean begins towards the end of the seventeenth century. In some areas this decline was faster than in others. When it does come, however, it is seen to be related to specific regional factors that put obstacles in the way of mercantile activity. The causes of decline are seen to have their roots in political and administrative chaos rather than in any disability of the merchant to subsist in the commercial world. The source of decline is thus the hinterland and not the port and the ocean.

Bibliographical Note

The historiography of the commerce of India and the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century is very varied in its quality and utility and more favoured for certain parts of the Ocean than for others. Historians of Mughal India have generally tended to concentrate on political, administrative and continental economic issues of which there have been ample to attract their attention. Histories of the Indian Ocean and of Asian commerce have succeeded in charting broad movements and changes in them and have generally lacked the depth of knowledge of the hinterland societies from which issued forth the commerce of the Ocean. By far the most fruitful and informative studies have come from those who have examined the operation of one or more of the European enterprises in this period. In this category of studies, there has been an increasing awareness of the need to move away from a perspective centred on the European power that is being studied. For a full understanding of the commerce of the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century, it is essential that the prospective student bring together information contained in all these three types of writings.

An essential starting point for any student of the commerce of India and the Indian Ocean is the work of W.H. Moreland. In two major books, *India at the Death of Akbar* (London, 1920) and *From Akbar to Aurangzeb* (London, 1923), Moreland has amassed all the evidence then available on India's foreign trade with the regions to the west and the east of the Indian Ocean. Moreland's findings have had a lasting impact on all subsequent historiography which did not progress much further until the late 1950's. When it began to do so, it was mainly in the form of intensive studies of particular trading regions or of European trading powers.

Noteworthy advances have been made with this form of approach. Portuguese records have been sifted to provide evidence not only of their commercial activities in the seventeenth century but also of the important partnerships with Indian merchants and of commerce under their protection. In this respect, a student of the seventeenth century should begin with the study of M.N. Pearson, *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat* (Berkeley, 1976) to understand the position at the beginning of the century in an important trading region For the seventeenth century itself, the works of C.R. de Silva, *Portuguese in Ceylon 1617-1638* (Colombo, 1972) and A.R. Disney, *Twilight of the Pepper Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973) are valuable in understanding trade carried out from areas of Portuguese control. J.J.A. Campos, *History of the Portuguese in Bengal* (Calcutta, 1919), an older work, attempts the same for Bengal but is very Portuguese-centred in its narrative. Vast areas of trade carried out from Portuguese settlements in Coromandel, the Arakan coast and even Bengal remain to be studied from their records.

Dutch activities in the Indian Ocean and the trade of the Ocean as seen through their records have been looked at more closely and a number of good monographs have resulted. These are both overall surveys and regional studies. Of the first type, C.R. Boxer, *Dutch Seaborne Empire* (London, 1965) has a useful chapter tracing Dutch inter-Asian trade connections through ports and factories, and K. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade 1620-1740* (Copenhagen, 1958) is essential for students of Indian Ocean trade, even though the primary thrust of the work is in the direction of the Asia-Europe trade. There are a number of regional studies. H. Terpstra's two works *De Opkomst der Westerkwartieren van de Oost-Indische Compagnie, Suratte, Arabie, Perzie* (The Hague, 1918) and *De Nederlanders in Voor-Indie* (Amsterdam, 1917) are very Dutch-centred accounts, concentrating on the foundation of Dutch settlements and factories and their trade. Ann Bos Radwan's *The Dutch in Western India 1601-1632* (Columbia, 1979) is of wider interest and deals with Dutch activities in the context of the overall trade of the Indian Ocean. M.A.P. Roelofsz, *De Vestiging der Nederlanders ter Kuste Malabar* (The Hague, 1943) has much material on the trade of Malabar. H.K.Jacob, *De Nederlanders in Kerala 1663-1701* ('S-Gravenhage, 1976), while being primarily a book of documents, contains a lengthy introduction with useful material on commerce. For an area which was the scene of much commercial activity and containing a large corpus of documentary sources, the commercial history of the Malabar coast has yet to be written for the seventeenth century from the point of view of Malabar's relations with oceanic trade.

Indo-Sri Lanka trade links are dealt with in S. Arasaratnam, *Dutch Power in Ceylon 1658-1687* (Amsterdam, 1958) together with the effects of Dutch naval domination on this trade.

The Coromandel coast, an important region of trade, was first dealt with in H. Terpstra, *De Vestiging der Nederlanders aan de Kust van Koromandel* (Groningen, 1911) but again from the point of view of the foundation of Dutch settlements and their trading interests. Years later the theme was taken up in T. Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel:1605-1690* ('S-Gravenhage, 1962) which has become a seminal work on the trade of Coromandel in the seventeenth century.

There are a number of works on the English East India Company in the seventeenth century, though most of them are oriented towards the establishment of English settlements and the trade to London. Two works of this type but useful for these themes are W. Foster, *England's Quest of Eastern Trade* (London, 1933) and H.C. Rawlinson, *British Beginnings in Western India: 1579-1657* (Oxford, 1920). The two works of K.N. Chaudhuri are seminal for an understanding of English trade in the Indian Ocean, *The English East India Company* (London, 1963) and *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 1978). The latter is a particularly significant contribution to the historiography of Indian Ocean trade using statistics of the Egnlish Company to study movement of goods and shipping within Asia as well as from Asia to Europe. S. Chaudhuri's *Trade and Commercial Organization in Bengal* 1650-1720 (Calcutta, 1975), primarily a work on English trade in Bengal, uses English evidence to shed light on Bengal in Asian trade. I.B. Watson, *Foundation for Empire : English private trade in India* 1659-1760 (New Delhi, 1980) usefully complements the above mentioned works and sheds light on the little known private trading activities of the English and their relations with Indian merchants.

Surat, as the dominant trading emporium of the Indian Ocean in the seventeenth century, has naturally been the subject of study. O.P. Singh's *Surat and its Trade in the Second Half on the 17th Century* (Delhi, 1976) goes over familiar ground, being largely based on published English records. Somewhat more successful is B. G. Gokhale, *Surat in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1979), especially as regards the hinterland connections of Surat but not adding significantly to our knowledge of its overseas trade. A. Das Gupta's *Indian Merchants, and the Decline of Surat c. 1700-1750* (Weisbaden, 1979), though primarily concerned with the eighteenth century, is a must for anyone wanting to understand the commercial relations of this great port at the end of the seventeenth century. Other ports like Hooghly, Calicut, Masulipatnam could well be the subject of such studies.

There are studies which attempt with varying success a synthesized treatment of the trade flowing through the entire stretch of Indian Ocean. C.G.F. Simkin's *The Traditional Trade of Asia* (London, 1968) attempts too much and is disappointing for the seventeenth century. A. Toussaint's *History of the Indian Ocean* (London, 1966) takes too much of a Eurocentred view of the Ocean to present a rounded picture of what happened in the Ocean in the seventeenth century. N. Steensgaard's *Carracks, Caravans and Companies* (Copenhagen, 1973) is much more successful, though confined to the western Indian Ocean and provides factual as well as theoretical reflections on that interaction. H. Furber showed what could be achieved in such a work of synthesis by one possessed of the requisite knowledge and the right perspectives. His *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800* (Minnesota, 1976) has brought together the body of available information to look at the trade of the

Indian Ocean as a totality and assessing the role of the Europeans in that trade.

It can be seen from this survey that there are yet a number of gaps in our historiography of the trade of the Indian Ocean. By far the darkest area is in our knowledge of the trade carried out by Asians in ports outside the control of the Europeans and outside the ken of their vision. This is, of course, a reflection of the limitations of our sources of information. Whatever results have been achieved in this respect, have been from a thorough study of records emanating from places where Europeans and Asians have traded in free and open competition. It is to this area of competitive interaction that the historian should increasingly divert his attention if he is to deepen his understanding of the dynamics of Asian trade in the seventeenth century.

6

India and the Indian Ocean in the Eighteenth Century

Ashin Das Gupta

Professor Holden Furber in his presidential address to the American Association of Asian Studies meeting at Boston in 1969, drew the attention of the scholarly world towards a lost face of the Indian Ocean during the age of sail. Colonial empires, he felt, had fostered a fierce racism in the nineteenth century and beyond. Earlier the European and the Asian had shared the Indian Ocean in a close-woven net of co-operation. 'The realities of life and death' he said on the occasion, in words often recalled later, 'in the East in the age of sail then threw Europeans into closer contact with Asians than was the case in the age of steam transportation and skilled European medicine which fostered aloofness and made it possible for hundreds of European women to play bridge in Bombay, Singapore or Shanghai completely oblivious of the world around them' [1] In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Professor Furber saw the possibilities of recovering the lost camaraderie after the loss of political control.

As he spoke, Furber was aware that an immaculate scepticism about the notion of partnership between the Asian and the European in the Vasco da Gama period had been expressed by no less a figure than Charles Boxer. It was, in fact, in the same year, 1969, that Boxer published his masterly summing-up, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire* in which he clearly expressed his opposition to the idea that the Portuguese had been free from racial prejudice. The theory of purity of blood and that of contaminated races were firmly held among them and even the Portuguese Church was shot through with racial discrimination. To this vigorous and incontrovertible criticism of partnership Furber opposed the idea that the racism of the empires which grew later was in a class by itself.

This difference of perceptions among two historians who, more than most have influenced the writers in this collection, is of crucial importance for us. I believe a solution and a reconciliation as suggested by Professor P. J. Marshall when he writes elsewhere in this volume that the shipping of the private British merchant in the Indian Ocean in the early eighteenth century carried goods of the Asians and for Asian markets whereas later they catered more and more for a restricted European clientele. The partnership was probably never one of unreserved human acceptance of each other but for much of the time the acceptance of a structure of trade and politics within which everybody functioned. And it was this partnership which was breaking up as the eighteenth century was drawing to its close.

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[1] This presidential address under the title 'India and the West as Partners Before Empire and After', was published in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, 38 (4 August 1969).

This sundering of the partnership was the work of the eighteenth century, but before we can take a close look at it, we should consider the echoes of an older and perhaps simpler discussion. As is well known it was J. C. Van Leur who, while reviewing Dr. E. C. Godes Molsbergen's *History of the Netherland Indies* in the year 1940, fiercely attacked the Eurocentric view of Indonesian history. Again it is worth citing a few sentences from a less known Boxer article : 'I should make it clear that I am not disputing Van Leur's contention that the European concept "eighteenth century" cannot be adequately applied as a subdivision for the course of Indonesian cultural history. The periodization for this needs to be a different one. "Is it possible" asked Van Leur "to write the history of Indonesia in the eighteenth century as the history of the (Dutch) Company?" He answered his own question with a resounding negative. Again, one can only agree; although I would add the caveat that it would be equally erroneous to write the history of Indonesia in the eighteenth century without giving due weight to the Company'.[2] This collection accepts this position *in toto* and while throughout emphasizing the indigenous reality of the Indian Ocean tries to see the European factor as an important part of it. I shall argue that the relative importance of the European factor grew considerably during the eighteenth century, and it is a characteristic of the century that at its end the Indian Ocean was dominated by the European.

The breakdown of the synthesis and the emerging domination by the European can be seen as important features of the eighteenth century in the history of the Indian Ocean. We have however to note a somewhat different kind of controversy which surrounds this ambiguous century. That is the discussion about decline. For a considerable time now, in the historiography of Indonesia, India and the Arab countries, the eighteenth century has been seen as a period of decline. The English saw the decline as justification for empire ; the Dutch saw in the period an eclipse of the noble Company ; the Arabs only treated it as background to their modern period. In recent years this notion of a decline has been criticized by historians working in each of these major areas. Barbara and Leonard Andaya sum up their own important work on Malay ethos when they write in the recent *History of Malaysia* about the danger of taking political fragmentation as evidence of decay. 'Such rationalization' they write of the nineteenth century British claim to restore order after anarchy, 'ignores the cyclical pattern of alternating fragmentation and unity which had characterized Malay-Indonesian commerce and politics for well over an thousand years'.[3]

At the other end of the ocean, no less a scholar than Professor Bernard Lewis, introducing Abu Hakima's study of the rise of Bahrain and Kuwait cautions the reader against treating the eighteenth century as a period of waiting for Bonaparte and commends the attention Hakima gives to 'the emergence of new centres of power in the Arabian Peninsula'.[4] Professor Thomas Naff editing the important collection *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* points out that 'the realities of the eighteenth century, even as we perceive them in the present limited state of our knowledge, are far more interesting and complex than the conventional portrait (of decline) which does not fully reveal the interplay of countervailing forces'.[5]

This arithmetic of decay and growth is particularly difficult to work out in the Indian subcontinent. The well-known eighteenth century anarchy, so lovingly recalled by early nineteenth century British scholar-administrators, is now being probed by India's new historians, intent on salvaging growth in provincial towns. A masterly, if somewhat agnostic summing-up of the debate, comes recently from Professor Tapan Raychaudhuri who writes : 'in the popular imagination the dim twilight over Delhi has been seen as enveloping the entire realm. We do not really know if this was in fact the case. For most features of the economy the meagre evidence processed so far suggests continuity rather than sharp change. It is even possible that the appearance of change in several instances is simply due to availability of relatively detailed information as compared to earlier periods.'[6]

There is therefore one kind of discussion about the eighteenth century which leads us to believe that the Asian and the European parted company in the Indian Ocean towards its close and another which leaves us somewhat uncertain whether that was a decline or growth in the littoral countries. While we wait for further facts to examine the strictly economic problem, it is useful to reflect that whatever may have happened to the feeder lines for the shipping in the Indian Ocean, there can be no doubt that by the turn of the nineteenth century not only was the European ship dominant in the ocean but that the Indian ship had sailed into oblivion. The native craft which from that time onwards became an object of curiosity for the European observer not only belonged to an earlier age but was altogether a lesser phenomenon. The decline was a fact as far as Indian shipowning was concerned. The changing character of the hinterland may well have been behind that decline.

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[2] cf. C. R. Boxer, 'On the 18th Century as a category of Indonesian History: A Reconsideration of Van Leur', in *Documentatieblad Werkgroep 18e-Eeuw*, 41-2 (February 1979).

[3] Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia* (London, 1982), p.23.

[4] cf. M. A. Abu Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia* (Beirut, 1973), Introduction, p.xviii.

[5] Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (eds.), *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), pp.4-5.

[6] cf. *Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol. 2. (Cambridge, 1983), p.9.

These general reflections on the character of the eighteenth century in the history of the Indian Ocean can now guide us to two major developments which may be thought to have shaped much of the history of the times. In the western Indian Ocean the magnificent Gujarati fleet, particularly prominent on the Red Sea run, gradually dwindled into insignificance, while in the eastern ocean the Calcutta fleet of the private British merchant won the supremacy of the ocean and at the close of the century had far outstripped the achievements of the Gujaratis even at their peak. The story of the ocean can be told round this fall and this rise, only adding in an aside the decline of the Dutch.

The history of the Gujarati merchants is as yet only dimly apprehended. As contributors to this collection have amply demonstrated, the rise of the Gujaratis in the trade of the Indian Ocean was a fairly continuous phenomenon from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. Gujarati shipping however was not necessarily and always in the hands of the Gujarati merchants. There is good ground for believing that in the early seventeenth century much of the shipping in fact belonged to the aristocracy with the Mughals controlling important parts of it. It was only in the later seventeenth century that the large princely ship declined in relative importance and the Gujarati fleet came to be dominated by the medium ship of around two hundred dead weight tons, owned by the merchants of Surat.[7]

At the turn of the eighteenth century Gujarat's trade in the Indian Ocean was still very prosperous although it had passed its peak. The ships had been badly mauled by European pirates, noticed elsewhere in this volume by Professor Newitt,[8] in the last two decades of the previous century. The decline of the Mughal empire and the raids by Shivaji, the rebel Maratha king, had affected Surat adversely. But the Gujaratis had continued to build more ships and in these years, for the first time, they were sending their vessels, admittedly only a few, to Canton and Manila. The volume of Gujarat's exports had not been in step with the demand in the Indian Ocean markets and there were several poor seasons for the merchants during these years. But the fleet numbered well over a hundred sea-going vessels of which the Mughal normally had two at sea while Mulla Abdul Ghafur the great shipowning merchant controlled seventeen.

Before we notice what happened to this fleet as the eighteenth century wore on, it will be useful to cast a glance at the mercantile society which upheld this shipping and about which we are less ignorant at this moment in Gujarat than elsewhere and at other times. The shipowning merchant of Surat was the obviously important figure one encountered in this society. They were not a large group as shipowning was risky and unpopular. General trade and shipowning had not yet been differentiated. Ghafur was the largest shipowner and richest merchant. His rivals, the Turkish Chellaby family, controlled no more than five ships at a time, although they were also among the richest merchants of the city. Such factions were the stuff of which the mercantile city was made and the shipowners quarrelled with one another fairly continuously and down the generations.

The same was true of men in general trade and brokerage and merchants of money. The curious paradox was in the fact that the structure of trade which stretched from the riverside of Surat to Delhi, Lahore and Benares was held up by these men who supplemented and supported the functions of one another while feuding endlessly among themselves within the same profession. The shipowning merchant operated with his brokers and money merchants, but shipowners, brokers and money merchants fought among themselves. The associations, such as they were, gathered social groups together rather than professions which attracted different communities. Hindus and Jains of similar castes were the closest approach to a functional guild in the business of brokerage. More usual was the *jamat* of the Bohras of the inland town of Patan of which Ghafur was the head. The *nagarseth* of Surat often compared to the mayor of European cities, was in fact the head of the Hindu and Jain merchants and acted only in emergencies, apart from one annual ceremonial occasion, the opening of the season when the citizens propitiated the river and the sea.

Shipowning merchants carried the goods of freighters as well as their own across the sea. Merchants in general trade divided their risks over a number of commodities and hired space on vessels going abroad. Brokers operated for their principal as in every transaction, foreigners needing them more than the locals. Money merchants changed foreign currency and bullion into Mughal rupees. They also controlled the local mint under a Mughal *darogha*. They controlled the money market and transferred money by various kinds of *hundis* as between any two points in India and abroad where Indian trade was regularly established. They also took care of the business of marine insurance which protected goods but not normally the ships themselves. They were also the major lenders in the city.

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[7] I have examined this problem briefly in 'Indian Merchants and the Western Indian Ocean, The Early 17th Century', in *Modern Asian Studies,* 19,3(1985).

[8] See below M. D. D. Newitt on eastern Africa.

At the turn of the eighteenth century a considerable amount in foreign money and bullion was still being imported every year at Surat. It is notoriously difficult to put any exact figures against such statements but it would be safe to assume an import of six million rupees worth from the Red Sea alone. Imports from other sources were not so important and the Mughals rightly regarded Mocha as their treasure chest. European trade at the time formed at most about one-eighth of the total trade at Surat and the Dutch who were one of the principal European bullion importers also relied on spices for which Surat paid a heavy price. The imports from the Persian Gulf had fallen away and the takings from southeast Asia were negligible. If there were any imports of gold from east Africa, other than via the Red Sea, no one as yet has tried to form an idea of its dimension. The bullion and the currency, overwhelmingly the Spanish dollar, were all melted down and made into Mughal rupees or mohurs, as these were the principal legal tender within the empire.

This mercantile net, importing money and sharing the business as between shippers, traders and brokers, connected with the areas of production in Gujarat and northwest India through a chain which included sub-brokers in the far away localities and headmen of weavers. Occasionally weavers in the town dealt directly with the merchant and the indigo growing peasant normally sold their crop at the local market to the highest bidder. But the chain was normal and it protected the rights of a large number of intermediaries, without ever coming in the way of free bargaining. The weaver had always the right to return any money he had taken as advance to be free to sell to another customer. The Mughal system was a strange mix of despotism, traditional rights and equally traditional freedom. The merchant was on occasion fleeced by the official but he habitually cheated at the customs. The weaver was undoubtedly squeezed by the merchant but some care had to be exercised that he stayed with the merchant from one year to the next.

This commercial system of Surat, principal port of the Indian empire of the Mughals, had come to full flower in the later seventeenth century but was already under pressure in the early eighteenth century. The trade to the Red Sea was overdone in the early years and by the middle of the second decade began to dwindle because of the civil wars which started in Yemen in 1714. The Zaidi Imams of Sana who had liberated Yemen from Turkish control in the 1630's gradually lost their authority from this time. The death of Imam Al Mahdi, in 1714, sparked off a conflict between the eldest son and a nephew which eventually saw the nephew take charge as Imam Qasim Mutwakil Bilah. The port-city of Mocha was closely involved in the conflict as the major source of the Imam's revenues. Inevitably the port customs were auctioned to the highest bidder and in addition frequent demands for 'contributions' from Sana had to be met by the merchants of Mocha, mainly the resident and visiting Gujaratis. The 1720's were the worst years for the Gujarati merchants in Yemen because of high and tyrannical taxation. It was also the time when the English private trader made serious inroads into the Mocha trade and security broke down in Gujarat.

The decline of Gujarati trade to the Red Sea was matched by the withdrawal of Gujarat's shipping from the Persian Gulf in the early years of the eighteenth century. In the early seventeenth century the Persians under Shah Abbas the Great had gained effective possession of the maritime belt, built their port at Bandar Abbas after expelling the Portuguese and connected that port with the interior by an impressive network of roads served by *serais*. By the last decade of the century however the dynasty under Shah Sultan Hussain, who succeeded his father Sulaiman in 1694, was unable to maintain the roads and was losing control of the littoral. The Omanis were raiding freely into the Gulf in the early years of the eighteenth century, and by 1717 they had taken Bahrain. Shipping in the Gulf was exposed to other pirates among whom the Sanghanians from Kathiawar did considerable damage. In 1719-20 the Safavids were anxious about an Omani attack on Bandar Abbas itself. But the dynasty was overthrown on land by the Galzai Afghans under Mir Mahmud on 8 March 1722 at the Battle of Gulnabad. These anarchic conditions in the Persian Gulf were faithfully reflected in the declining number of Gujarati ships sailing in that direction and figures for low profits and increasing losses.

The navigation in the Gulf continued to seek other havens after the eclipse of Bandar Abbas; but before we follow these latter years it will be useful to look at the Yarubis of Oman who had once been welcome guests at Surat but who had by this time become the tyrants of the western waters. The Yarubis had fought the Portuguese in the western Indian Ocean with ships built mainly at the riverside of Surat. It was under Imam Saif ibn Sultan (1679-1711) that the Omanis began raiding the ports of the Persian Gulf. His successor, Sultan ibn Saif II (1711-1719), further strengthened the Muscat navy. In the early decades of the eighteenth century this Yarubi navy was undoubtedly one of the strongest operating all over the western Indian Ocean and because of its piratical bent the Gujaratis on occasion suffered severely from it. In 1710, for example, the fleet of Hindustan was the target of the Omani navy watching off the Red Sea, and on this occasion Mulla Abdul Ghafur lost a richly laden vessel to them. Some relief however was provided by the civil war in Oman which followed the death of Sultan ibn Saif II and the powerful pirate force of the Yarubis declined.

The Gujaratis were thus on the retreat from both the Red Sea and the Persian market in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The reason for it was only partly that civil war in Yemen and insecurity in the Gulf made trading difficult ; more importantly the Gujarati merchant was under pressure at home. As the Mughal empire declined in western India, Surat lost its far flung hinterland which had earlier linked the port to much of northern India and the routes to central Asia. During the second decade of the century, Surat came to be cut off from its more immediate hinterland in Gujarat itself. The Mughal officials surrendered the control of the countryside to the light Maratha cavalry and withdrew into the cities which could now live only upon their suburbs. The besieged Mughal noblemen often tried to find their sustenance from plunder of mercantile property which was dwindling anyway with the decline of the Indian Ocean trade. The processes reacted upon one another : the Persian market could not be supplied with indigo because the routes to Agra where the best indigo was grown were blocked and little imports reached Surat from the Gulf, only to be piled up in the city itself. The Gujarati merchant was thus in no position to seek compensation in the east for what he was losing in the west.

There were some possibilities of a rally in the western ocean when Nadir Shah (c.1732-1747) took control of the littoral of Iran and built a navy to command the Gulf. This navy, like the navy of the Yarubis, was mainly built or bought at Surat, but unlike the Yarubi naval force was never deployed outside the Gulf. It took part in an unsuccessful action against Ottoman Basra in 1735. Next year Latif Khan, the Persian admiral, had better luck against Bahrain, which was wrested from the Huwala Arabs who had earlier taken it from the Omanis. These Huwala Arabs were those who lived along the Persian coast of the Gulf and often competed with the Arabs of Muscat for supremacy within the Gulf. Ports along the Gulf tended to group themselves on tribal lines and build up alliances and enmities in conformity with their tribal experiences. Persian seafaring, whatever it might have been in earlier centuries, was negligible at the time. These Arab maritime tribes, many of them in fact migrants from the interior, held both sides of the Gulf and took part freely in the struggle between Persia, Turkey and Oman for the control of the Gulf. As Professor Abu Hakima puts it: 'This question of a Persian fleet (being built by Nadir) was felt by the Arabs on both coasts of the Gulf. Those on the Persian littoral were ordered to hand over to the Persians a certain number of ships. These Arabs, mostly of the Huwala tribe, had been used to trade with their kinsmen of the Arabian littoral. The maritime Arabs of the Gulf, when oppressed, customarily took to their boats with their families; they abandoned their ports and resorted to their kinsmen to await their day of revenge'.[9] The Huwala Arabs fell in with Nadir's dictat only with great reluctance, but they did help his admirals to overrun Oman in 1738, and again in 1743. But the relations with the Persian commanders were never happy and the Huwala Arabs once captured the entire fleet in 1740. The fleet which grew to about thirty warships by the end of Nadir's reign was already being neglected at that time. It did not survive his death for long although Bushire, which Nadir had made the headquarters of his naval force continued to prosper for some decades to come.

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[9] cf. Abu Hakima, op. cit., p.35.

The last attempt at Iranian control of the littoral was made under Karim Khan Zand (c.1756-1779), but by that time the Indian and Arab merchant were withdrawing from the trade of the Gulf. The older kind of commerce dominated by the connection with Mughal Hindustan was definitely at an end, although the Europeans were less affected and the northern end of the Gulf remained relatively untouched by the debacle. As Dr. T. Ricks puts it: 'Already it was clear that the "country merchant" had lost the necessary internal economic and political security and markets to compete successfully on the same scale as the Europeans in southern Iran and the Gulf. The politics and trade were still profitable for them, but more than before, the "country merchant" either abandoned Southern Iran for the northern towns and ports (under Qujar tribal authority) or settled in India'.[10]

What happened in the Gulf in the later eighteenth century was the loss of political control by the mainland states and as a result the rise of the Arab maritime tribes, especially the rise of the Utub tribes at Bahrain and Kuwait. The Utbis had consolidated their hold over Kuwait from the early eighteenth century in the vacuum created by the eclipse of the Safavids and the weakening of Ottoman Basra. They managed to take over Bahrain only in 1783. To achieve this they had to assert their supremacy in the struggle among the maritime tribes which was so fierce especially after the death of Karim Khan. The later eighteenth century in particular was thus an unsettled phase for the Gulf but out of it the more peaceable formations of the next century emerged.

A major factor in this eventual settlement was the establishment of the power of the Busaidi dynasty at Muscat. The civil war in Oman had led by the middle of the century to the assumption of the Imamate by Ahmad ibn Said who began to emphasize the maritime role of Muscat more than the territorial base of the Imams. His successors in the Al Busaid dynasty were merchant princes, more interested in the Indian Ocean links than with tribal matters. The Imamate in fact came to be separated from the rulership of Muscat and under Sultan ibn Ahmad (1792-1804) the commercial fleet of the Omani Arabs reclaimed the importance it had lost in the middle years of the century. The Busaidi rulers directed the attention of Muscat more and more towards eastern Africa till under the outstanding leadership of Sayid Said, Zanzibar emerged as an alternative capital for the dynasty. The return of the 'Arab factor' in the Indian Ocean towards the close of the eighteenth century was further assisted by the increasing importance of the ports of Hadramaut which began sending their vessels all over the ocean, especially to the Indian ports and to southeast Asia.

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[10] cf. T. Ricks, 'Politics and Trade in Southern Iran and the Gulf, 1745-1765', D. Phil. thesis Indiana, 1975, p.334.

The Arabs 'returned' to an altered world and the alteration can be best understood by taking a look at the position of the Gujaratis. Surat, as we saw, was eclipsed because of the simultaneous weakening of the Mughals in India, the Safavids in Persia and the Ottomans in the Red Sea. Gujarati shipping which had dominated the western Indian Ocean, especially the routes to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, dwindled away. It is possible that by the middle of the eighteenth century Surat, which had been the home of an ocean going fleet counting well over a hundred, had no more that one fifth of that number. The total turnover at the port, computed at around sixteen million rupees at the turn of the century was no more than a quarter of that figure by the 1740's. Muslim shipowners were being decimated while the Bania and the Parsi migrated and sought new alliances. Parsis went mostly to Bombay and the story of their English attachment is well known. Less well known is the fact that the Banias of Surat, although not migrating in comparable proportion to Bombay, offered important support to the new English dispensation which was growing in the western waters. This was in fact an old story for the Indian Ocean : the Asian shipowner had always found it difficult to compromise with Europeans because of the competition for the carrying trade while the shore-based merchant had found accommodation both possible and often desirable. Something like this had happened, for example, in the early sixteenth century at Portuguese Malacca and quite differently in late seventeenth century Madras. The Indian shipowning merchant would congregate at a European controlled port only when there was no appreciable European shipping. This the ocean had also seen at French and Danish settlements of the Coromandel coast which the Indians had used as protection against Dutch restrictions in the eastern seas.

Bania migration from a declining Surat went partly to Bombay and in an important part to ports of Kathiawar and Kutch. Port towns like Mandvi in Kutch, Porbandar and Bhavnagar gained in importance as the Mughal metropolis was eclipsed. Many of these Banias established connections with Muscat and the great Busaidi expansion along the eastern littoral of Africa was importantly underpinned by Bania support. Surat was effectively occupied by the English when they took over the castle and the office of the Mughal admiral, expelling the Sidis of Janjira, in 1759. Afterwards it was English shipping, especially the ships patronized by the chiefs of the English factory, which dominated the port. Muslim shipowners did not go out of business but found it more and more difficult to carry on, while Banias by and large were content to ship their goods on English bottoms and support the English operations across India with their *hundis*.

The character of the trade of Surat altered significantly. From exporting manufactured cloth and shipping indigo mainly to the ports of western Asia, Surat became a collecting point for raw cotton to be shipped by the English, official and unofficial as also their allies, to China. In the later eighteenth century this was Surat's main trade and the city had become a support for Bombay which was commanding the high seas. The Arab, now in collaboration with sections of the Banias, carved out a secondary sphere of activity in the western Indian Ocean, concentrating on the African trade, the port to port exchange and took only a modest share of the high sea navigation, going towards the east. Muslim shipowners of Surat and the other coastal roadsteads fitted themselves into this new pattern, avoiding European dominated sea-lanes and finding sustenance where the Europeans were reluctant to penetrate.

The fact that in the later eighteenth century Bombay took the major trade of the west coast towards China is not to be doubted but equally incontrovertible is the fact that of the British presidencies, Bombay remained a backwater for much of this time. The important change along the west coast lay in the building of the Bombay marine which was more or less done at the shipyard of the Parsi Nasserwanji, a migrant from Surat in the 1730's. It was this Bombay Marine which crushed the challenge of the Angrias in the middle of the century and neutralized other possible claimants to the sovereignty of the sea, including the Marathas of Bassein, and the Savants of Wadi. It is a remarkable fact that after the vigorous challenges offered to the Portuguese in the sixteenth century,this was the only period when a struggle was waged for the control of the coastal waters off the west coast. And it was the victory which Bombay gained that enabled the English to impose their own pass system along the coast and organize the shipping directed towards China. The Bombay Marine however remained more or less a coastal force, shaping badly for instance in an effort to challenge the Arabs in the Gulf in the 1770's.

The English capture of Surat and the policing of the off-shore belt by the Bombay Marine gave the British private merchant a unique advantage which they readily exploited. The ports of Malabar were at the time undergoing important changes and the pepper trade of the coast which the British merchant coveted was the subject of attention from various quarters. The Dutch, settled at Cochin from the 1660's had claimed a monopoly in the trade of pepper which had never been very effective. In the first half of the eighteenth century this monopoly was challenged by the revived city-port of Calicut in the north and Travancore under king Martanda Varma in the south. The demand at Calicut was probably produced by the eclipse of the trade to the Persian Gulf and the chaotic conditions at Surat. It is a notable fact that the vessels which called for pepper at Calicut came mostly from ports like Porbandar, Kutch-Mandvi and Muscat. It is to be presumed that they carried the pepper to the Red

Sea and the Gulf, asserting the importance of the secondary network in the western Indian Ocean. But the British private merchant was also vigorously acting in the trade and they organized the supply of pepper and sandalwood at Tellicherry, Calicut and Anjengo during the later eighteenth century with the help of some major merchants of Malabar like Ezechiel Rahabi of Cochin, Haji Yusuf of Calicut and Choucara Musa of Tellicherry. This demand coming from both the networks of oceanic trade proved a bane for the Dutch monopoly at Cochin.

The other claimant to pepper was the state of Travancore as it shaped under Martanda Varma (1729-58). The monopoly in the trade of pepper established by Martanda Varma was unique in the history of the period. Under the arrangements made for this monopoly, merchants of Travancore became agents of the government and supplied pepper to state depots run by a commercial department at fixed prices and obtained a fixed commission. The producers were also paid a price fixed by the state and large profits were made by the government on the eventual sale of the commodity. Because of the Dutch control around Cochin, Travancore would for the early years of the system send the pepper across to the eastern coast over the hills, but in the 1780's, under king Rama Varma, Travancore made for itself a port at Allepey to the south of Cochin and catered directly to the Indian Ocean demand. The Dutch had been unable to check Travancore militarily in the 1740's and were obliged to accept this breakthrough in the 80's because of growing weakness.

For sometime in the later eighteenth century, Mysore under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan attempted to achieve profits from oceanic trade similar to Travancore's. Tipu Sultan overran Calicut in the 1780's and organized both a monopoly and a commercial fleet in the Arabian Sea. But this effort came to nothing when the English cut him off from the sea in 1792. It was eventually the English private merchant who claimed the trade in the wake of the armies. By the end of the eighteenth century, the west coast of India saw its trade centred at Bombay. Surat was an important supporting port for the operations at Bombay, which were concerned mainly with the trade to China. Ships were being built at Bombay for this trade, and these, around one thousand tons, were much larger than the ships which had dominated the fleet of Hindustan around the turn of the eighteenth century. There was now a greater difference between these ships engaged in long distance oceanic trade and the smaller vessels plying the trade of the roadsteads. The Bombay Marine was in control of the coastal waters, and the English private vessel and vessels carrying the English pass were effectively protected. The Arabs of Muscat were prominent in the Arabian Sea and the navigation down the coast of Africa. So were other Arabs from the Gulf and the ports of Hadramaut. Some of them also participated in the high-sea trade directed towards Canton and they had a few vessels built for the purpose at Bombay. The Parsis, of course, had moved to Bombay and some of them were actively in the China trade with the English. The Banias were also in an important way with the English but they were more interested in handling money transfers between Bengal and Bombay and in arranging supplies to the shipping. Some among them had moved over to arrangements with the Omanis and were actively in the India–Africa trading network. The man who had virtually disappeared was the Gujarati shipowner and the vessel which was little to be seen was the medium ship of around two hundred ton carrying capacity, built after the European model of the seventeenth century. Indian shippers were still active but they had been relegated to the smaller vessels and the trade of the roadsteads. They were also in the trades which no longer attracted European interest, like carrying pepper from Calicut to the Gulfs. Trade at the turn of the nineteenth century depended far more on the immediate hinterland than had been the case a hundred years earlier. The deeper penetration via the network stretching from Gujarat to Benares, Multan and Kabul no longer operated.

In a sense the whole of the western Indian Ocean in the second half of the eighteenth century was a secondary field of operations as far as the merchants of the ocean were concerned. The main thrust was carried by the Calcutta fleet towards the southeast and the east. But behind the rise of this fleet of the private British trader was the decline of the ports of Hooghly and Balasore. As Professor Arasaratnam explains in his survey of the seventeenth century the shipping based at these two ports had done remarkably well during that period. Hooghly with its dominant Shia merchants had strong links with the Persian Gulf but the main operations had been in the port to port trade of the Bay of Bengal. It would seem that at its peak, in the later seventeenth century, around twenty ships based at Hooghly were the principal carriers of this commerce. These ships were owned, by and large, by high Mughal officials among whom General Mir Jumla, Prince Shah Shuja and deputy governors of Orissa, *dewans* of Orissa and Bihar and several *fauzdars* of Rajmahal and Hooghly were mentioned at different times. As late as the later 1680's, the English in their war with the Mughal had captured some of these ships and they were mostly large ones, around 400 to 600 tons. This kind of shipping was characteristic of the port of Surat in the early seventeenth century. But in course of the seventeeth century the fleet based at Surat had grown much larger and the large-sized princely ship had become less numerous compared to the medium ship of the merchant.

A similar transformation clearly did not happen at Hooghly and when at the turn of the eighteenth century the Mughal aristocracy, for whatever the reason, withdrew from shipping the small ships of the merchants were seen to be insignificant. Voyages from Bengal to favoured ports like Tenasserim and Acheh had fallen to virtually nothing. Coastal voyages to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, however, continued in the 1700's and ships, mainly from

Gujarat provided the merchants of Bengal with oceanic carriers. These Gujarati ships again became fewer in number as the century advanced. This was partly because of the problems which overwhelmed Gujarat at the time and partly due to the expansion of English shipping at Calcutta. Indian merchants operating from Bengal steadily shifted their custom to the Calcutta fleet.

Professor P.J.Marshall surveys the rise of this fleet during the eighteenth century and comes to the important conclusion that while in the previous century Indians and Britishers had shared in an expanding commerce, in the constricting circumstances of the eighteenth century, the English private merchant's ship was able to exclude the Indian ship from the carrying trade of the ocean. Looked at from the sea, this conclusion is inescapable as there is nothing to suggest that anyone was using any non-commercial compulsion to oust the Indian shipowner. We may however recall in this context the history of the hinterland which fed any kind of shipping operating from the ports of Bengal. For one thing, the English obtained privileges of duty-free trade in 1717, on payment of only Rs 3000 annually. This privilege was meant for the trade of the Company to Europe but was used from the beginning for the benefit of all English trade. The English private merchant therefore was in a position to undersell his competitor in the market for Bengal goods around the Indian Ocean.

Indian merchants who made arrangements with the Englishmen, as for example, the notorious Amirchand (Omichaund) with the chief of the English factory at Patna, could use the same privilege and obtain the same advantage. As Professor N. K. Sinha pointed out in the first volume of his *Economic History of Bengal*, this was partly the reason for the marked expansion of the maritime trade of Calcutta in the early eighteenth century. Neither Murshid Quli (d.1727) nor his successor Shuja ud Din (d.1738) as *nawab* of Bengal could check this abuse. They did however prevent a further expansion of this privilege to include what is known to historians as the inland trade of Bengal, that is the trade in salt, betel nut and tobacco, commodities meant for local consumption.

The fact that the English private trader and Indian merchants who worked with them had a differential advantage over all competitors in the Indian Ocean trade and that this advantage was not obtained through any commercial means should be borne in mind. And to that we should add the fact to which Professor Holden Furber drew our attention in his article 'Glimpses of Life and Trade on the Hugli 1720-1770' in *Bengal Past and Present* (1967). From the early eighteenth century both the Dutch and the English deployed what can under those circumstances only be described as substantial military force to protect their trade in Bengal. Around three hundred European troops would march every year with the English 'Patna fleet' along the Ganga and see the boats carrying piecegoods, salt petre and opium safely past all the innumerable customs *choukies*, including those of the *nawab* himself, to their destination in Calcutta. The Dutch had a somewhat larger number of Malays under European officers performing similar duties. Indian merchants who were within the English system not only enjoyed exemption from normal customs but also freedom from all demands along the river route. The shipping operating from Calcutta therefore would be patronized by all those who would opt for this system.

The *nawab* Shuja ud Din did on occasions challenge this alternative system but only to insist that it did not reorganize the internal trading system. He would recede on the payment of substantial compensation. The European military force remained a factor of some importance within Bengal before Plassey and in 1739 helped in turning the Marathas away from the gates of Patna. An Indian historian[11] who treats with respect the position that the English in Bengal before Plassey were working all out to bring prosperity to Bengal and were being tortured and fleeced by the administration for their pains, notes nevertheless on this occasion that 'the presence of the English army at Patna, as they (the English) maintained, not only protected the trade of the Company but also dissuaded the enemy (the Marathas) from attempting an invasion and thus gave security to the state. The question of security of the state and of the commerce of the Company had by this time become interconnected. This was ultimately revealed in 1757'. Professor Furber also notices the steady decline of Indian shipping on the river and the growth of English vessels and English force in the years before the military overthrow of the *nawab* and says that 'the "revolution" in Bengal in the late 1750's was not as sudden as it seems. It had long been in the making'.

The river in Bengal had always been the strength of the Europeans. It was impossible for the Mughals to police the southern marshes where their cavalry did not operate. The Europeans could and did block the river when the occasion demanded. It was extremely difficult for a Mughal force to dislodge Europeans who had dug themselves in anywhere along the lower reaches of the river. The power of the Mughals in Bengal and elsewhere lay in denying Europeans access to markets in the hinterland. In the early eighteenth century this power gradually gave way. This fact is easily demonstrated in Gujarat but is not so apparent in Bengal. It would however seem that the Europeans especially the English, had in these years built up an alternative system of supplying their river-port at Calcutta. Merchants operating in the hinterland, particularly along the river to the markets in Bihar, found this alternative more and more acceptable. Indian shipping at Hooghly had already been weakened and those from Gujarat were being decimated by the breakdown in the hinterland of Surat. The Calcutta fleet with all its political privilege and military strength grew to considerable stature in these years. It seems possible to suggest that the Indian lost his ship not at high sea but on the hinterland.

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[11] Sukumar Bhattacharya, *The English East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, from 1704 to 1740* (Calcutta, 1969), p. 66. Furber's view is in the article cited in text.

It is however important to remember that unlike in Gujarat where much of the hinterland was blotted out and trade came to be confined to the coast, Bengal's hinterland was partially controlled by the English even before Plassey and fully held by them in the later eighteenth century. Trade along the Ganga (Hooghly) turning right to Dacca and left towards Patna and Benares changed character as the century wore on but was never really disrupted. Shipping grew by leaps and bounds in Calcutta. This is why it is difficult to see any decline if one looks up the river from Calcutta or out towards the sea.

The hinterland is just as important if we wish to understand the history of the Coromandel coast. The ports there were never the kind of metropolis that Mughal Surat was at its prime. For the most part the roadsteads of Coromandel threw up port-towns which depended for their sustenance on the state in the immediate hinterland. One roadstead was much like another and trade could move from one to the other without much of a commotion. Masulipatnam, nursed by the Shia kingdom of Golconda, had enjoyed all the blessings of a thriving hinterland through much of the seventeenth century. Mir Jumla who was later to desert Golconda service for the Mughal's was responsible for building up the shipping of the port, deploying much of it towards Persia. The nobility of Golconda and aristocratic Shia merchants closely connected with the court had supported the Mir's efforts and large ships had been built for these patrician traders at Madapollam and Narsapore. This prosperity was laid low in the last decade of the seventeenth century with the fall of the Qutb Shahs of Golconda. The nobility presumably withdrew from trade and the patrician merchants disappeared. Large ships were no longer built at Madapollam and her sister shipyard. It is possible that the Pathans who were reported in the first decades of the eighteenth century to be moving down towards San Thome were some of these men from Masulipatnam searching for a different haven. The trade in the costlier textiles moving towards the western Indian Ocean declined. Hindu merchants moved north towards Ganjam. Masulipatnam continued to support a low level of maritime trading but her links with Golconda-Hyderabad were never reforged and the hinterland of the Godavari and the Krishna on which she had drawn remained disrupted.

Disruption of the hinterland was also a major fact if one moved from north to middle Coromandel. If we leave out Madras, the only port to do well in the middle stretches (an area which never really recovered from the Mughal-Maratha struggle in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century) was San Thome. This port, formerly a Portuguese enclave under its Mughal administrators successfully challenged the English establishment and drew to itself much of the trade still going towards the west mainly in the vessels of the Pathan merchants and even the trade of English private merchants coming from the east.

Political unsettlement did relatively less damage to southern Coromandel where Cuddalore defied English Fort St. David, as San Thome had withstood Madras. Further south, Porto Novo was the great centre of the area, the real successor of Masulipatnam. Tamil Muslims known as the Chulias were the main shippers of these two port-cities which concentrated on the traffic to southeast Asia mainly to Acheh, Johor and the ports of Burma. This was also the case with Nagore, another Chulia settlement, which in addition to the trade of Bay of Bengal continued the old connection of Coromandel with Sri Lanka and Malabar. The Pathans of San Thome and the Chulias of Porto Novo kept alive the shipping of the coast which had suffered so much from the disappearance of the larger ships of Masulipatnam. The Chulias in particular established close connection with some of the ruling families in southeast Asia and had considerable influence in southern Coromandel as well.

If Gujarat moved from large royal ships to medium merchant shipping and Bengal lost the nobleman's ship without gaining a mercantile fleet of the commoner, Coromandel learned to do without the princely ship with some compensation from shippers who never quite matched the Gujaratis and always looked for the princely connection. There can however be little doubt that Coromandel ships were smaller in the eighteenth century and shipowners who traded to Johor and Kedah were lesser men, probably of the one-man one-ship variety. It is impossible to examine the fortunes of the Indian shipping that remained because we know next to nothing of ports like Nagore and Porto Novo in the later eighteenth century.

The Indian Ocean trade of the Coromandel coast lost and gained considerably from the Dutch connection in the early eighteenth century. The Dutch had by this time gained effective control over eastern Indonesia and Indian shipping were redeploying to the western rim of the Malay-Indonesian world. The Dutch now began to carry to Java the textiles previously carried by Indian ships. The volume of Dutch trade with Coromandel was extensive and they rearranged their priorities so that sixty per cent of their exports went towards Batavia for the Indian Ocean market while only forty went to Europe. Ports controlled by the Dutch along the coast however withered. At Nagapatnam which was the headquarters and at ports like Pulicat and Sadraspatnam the restrictions on trade placed by the Dutch made Indian shipping withdraw to neighbouring roadsteads. This was in marked contrast to what happened at Pondicherry, Tranquebar and Madras. At the French and the Danish settlements in particular, Indian shipping found havens to use, along with the flag as protection against the restrictions the Dutch placed at sea. As long as

Dutch trade was substantial, however, they were welcomed by the coastal rulers of Coromandel. Indian textiles however began to lose their traditional markets in the southeast. Java in particular appears to have started its own weaving rather than buy the cloth at the rates the Dutch offered.

The decline and dispersal of Indian shipping along the coast of Coromandel would seem to be facts beyond dispute, although several port-towns continued in business for much of the century. Coastal navigation however appears to have gained in importance. The trade in grain certainly expanded during the course of the eighteenth century. Smaller craft in larger numbers began to ferry grain from Bengal and Orissa, from the basins of the Godavari and the Krishna to deficit areas down the coast and to the rim of Sri Lanka which was becoming over-populated. Pepper, tobacco and areca nut formed the staple of coastal trade which had long plied between Madura, Sri Lanka and Malabar and which the Dutch failed to control after many attempts. The eighteenth century saw in fact a loosening of the Dutch hold on Sri Lankan trade and an intensification of this traffic of the smaller craft.

Fragmentation had always been the characteristic of Coromandel and the growth of Madras in the later seventeenth century had not changed the picture. This growth in fact has been over-emphasized in the sense that although Madras grew to the prosperity of a medium Indian port-town by the 1700's, it was never able to attract to itself the major part of the trade the coast. The decline of Masulipatnam and the political instability in the middle Coromandel area because of the Mughal-Maratha struggle has hightened the importance of Madras as a haven of security in the historical imagination. But Indian trade had moved not so much to Madras as to ports like San Thome, Porto Novo and Nagore. The private shipping of the English, which was the most important factor behind the growth of trade at Madras, was checked by the Calcutta fleet and its control of the river in Bengal. Indian shippers undoubtedly moved to Madras and developed their trade at the port but much of it happened to be of the dependent variety, that is to say of Telugu merchants who served the English on shore in subordination. Some of the Pathans also moved but this was not a success as the English remained worried about any challenge to their superior control of the port-city. Armenian merchants, present in strength and important in the trade to Manila, were never in the same class of potential trouble-makers. The Muslim *nakhoda* in the Indian Ocean had never been able to come to terms with European shippers and as the century wore on the lone *nakhoda* commanding his small ship from Porto Novo or Nagore to Johor or Perak remained as a memory of earlier days while Madras, after the military intervention along the coast in the middle eighteenth century, built its new dispensation.

This new dispensation confirmed the fact of dependence of the Indian

merchant and weaver. The three decades from the 1740's saw a considerable disruption in trade around Madras due to the Anglo-French struggle for political power. When the dust settled, the English Company, although the victor, was constrained to reduce its revenue to maintain a much larger establishment. The trade to China was now claiming the first attention of the Company as also of the English private merchant. Money necessary for the China trade began to flow from the Coromandel coast eastwards while there was a westward flow towards London as private merchants began to ship pagodas for want of a legitimate avenue of remittance. Indian merchants who earlier in the century had been used to large orders from the Company and money flowing in to lubricate the wheels of coastal commerce found their strength ebbing. The sapping of the merchant's power upon the coast was compounded by the decision of the English Company to eliminate the merchant as middlemen between itself and the weaver. Something like it happened in Bengal in 1753 when the *dadni* merchants who delivered cloth by contract were dispensed with and the English *gomasta* turned up at the *aurungs* where the merchants used to buy.

The process as it operated in Coromandel, first led to the bypassing of the coastal merchant and the village broker. The Company's officials and their Indian agents penetrated the weaving villages and dealt directly with the men at the looms. The trade in yarn flowed to the Englishman and his *gomasta* from these new lines. In northern Coromandel where the weavers were used to the freedom of the market the attempt at imposing some form of bonded service failed. The head weavers everywhere had to be placated and their services acquired for the new forms of exploitation. Resistance from the weavers and the ousted merchants had in some places to be beaten down. But eventually in the 1780's the middlemen had once more to be recalled because the responsibilities for running such an intricate system proved too much for the Company's establishment. The coastal merchant had by then been weakened beyond redemption and the vacuum was filled by the English private trader who obliged the Company by demanding little cash and by accepting bills on London. Money-making by Englishmen in later eighteenth century Coromandel was however not so much in trade as in revenue-farming, in various kinds of contracts with the government and in general concerned with the pickings which came from political conquest without administrative control.

It was this change from maritime trade to inland politics which altered the character of the Indian merchants working with the Englishmen upon the coast. The middleman merchant was replaced by the salaried employee. Earlier in the century the Telugu trading castes had been well represented in the structure of procurement for the English Company's commerce, but gradually new men of the administrative castes took over. The *dubash* became the key figure in the eighteenth century setting aside the relatively more independent chief merchant of the earlier times. Lower down the rung the *kanakapillai* and the *gomasta* assisted the Englishmen to break down the autonomy of the coastal trading system and penetrate into the weaving villages of Coromandel in the middle eighteenth century. The system we saw operating the late seventeenth century Gujarat was undermined and ties of dependence grew in the hinterland of the coastal port-towns. The well-known diary of the Tamil merchant Ananda Ranga Pillai as well as the documents of the French establishment at Pondicherry also support this picture of the gradual erosion of the independent merchant. The ships which carried the produce of India at the close of the eighteenth century to the different markets of the Indian Ocean not only carried somewhat different kinds of goods in which agricultural commodities were already claiming a relative predominance but they were fed by a hinterland which had been rearranged. The Mughal merchant called the 'Bania' had given way to the English 'Banian', a very different animal. The ship of the private British merchant which dominated the ocean in the later eighteenth century was supported by these new men from a dependent hinterland.

The decline of the fleet of Hindustan based at Surat indicates a whole range of changes coming over maritime trade, as does the rise of the Calcutta fleet, expressing new relations of trade under political control. The alterations during the eighteenth century in the Indian Ocean were caused however in an important way by the decline of the commercial system of the Dutch East India Company. Professor Om Prakash and Professor Arun Das Gupta elsewhere in this volume discuss the importance of the Dutch in the trade of the Indian Ocean in general and of course for the Malay-Indonesian world in particular during the seventeenth century. At the turn of the eighteenth century the Dutch Company was undoubtedly the single largest concern in the oceanic commerce, sending the biggest fleets every year to Bengal, Coromandel and Surat, while holding Cochin as a political base. The ships flying the orange flag also visited the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea regularly, taking an important share in the carrying trade of the western Indian Ocean. Coastal Sri Lanka was more or less under Dutch control in the later seventeenth century. Eastern Indonesia, after some hard campaigning, also came under Dutch power at the same time. Javanese shipping based at the ports of the *pasisir*, northeastern Java, declined as the area was destroyed by attacks from the inland power of Mataram and engrossed within the Dutch system. The Dutch would annex this coast outright in the 1740's. In the 1680's they prevented a possible revival of shipping in the area by the overthrow of Bantam. Dutch control over the spice trade therefore was the most effective in the later seventeenth century. Ironically however, the hard struggles which led to the elimination of Macassar in the 1660's and of Bantam twenty years later, delivered the finer spices to the Dutch at a time when the trade was yielding in importance to the trade in Indian textiles and would be reduced to further insignificance by the growth of the trade in China tea. However, the Dutch controlled the Sunda Straits absolutely and the Malacca Straits with enough power to warn off large scale contravention of their system. Indian shipping and trade therefore withdrew more and more to the Malay ports like Kedah and Johor, and concentrated on the trade of tin and ivory and Sumatran pepper.

This assertion of Dutch power in the Indian Ocean was basically an assertion of sea-power. At the turn of the eighteenth century thirty to forty large ships came every year from Europe and remained to participate in the port to port trade before returning home. The marine based at the Asian ports of the Dutch Company was also of a considerable size. But already this trend on which Jan Pieterszoon Coen had established the seaborne empire was going in reverse. The campaigns of the later seventeenth century, especially in Java, were building preoccupations with an empire on land. As the eighteenth century advanced, it was this preoccupation with a land empire which dominated Dutch policy and claimed the Dutch resources. Dutch shipping steadily fell away in the Indian Ocean. In 1674, they had 124 ships of all sizes in Asia; by 1704, this had already become 81. By the 1770's, the number had fallen to thirty. The size of the fleet operating in Asia fell further by the fact that more and more ships were allowed to return directly to Europe from Bengal or Batavia as the century advanced.

The Dutch also lost to the English in technical knowledge and expertise in the eighteenth century. It is true that they built larger ships and in sufficient number to keep their yards occupied throughout the period but the ships were slower and less easy to manoeuvre. English ships were making quicker round voyages with naturally lower mortality rates. English sea atlases and charts surpassed those of the Dutch as the latter continued to reproduce their well-known and rightly acclaimed maps of the 1670's. They also found it more and more difficult to man their ships and a time came in the 1790's when large numbers of Chinese, Malay and Indian seamen were permitted even obliged to sail the Europe-ships. Indian and Asian sailors had, of course, manned Dutch ships in Asia throughout the eighteenth century.

This decline of Dutch shipping in the Indian Ocean, together with the growing commercial and political problems round the Indian Ocean meant a retreat of the Dutch Company from the navigation of the Red Sea in the 1750's.However, they had already successfully introduced the plantation of coffee in Java and were selling it profitably in the Netherland by the 1730's. Customers in the Indian Ocean markets however obstinately continued to prefer the Arabian produce which the Dutch were unable to procure in the later eighteenth century. There was a similar retreat from the trade of the Persian Gulf in the 1760's, by which time the trade at Surat itself had been reduced to less than half of what it was at the turn of the century. This trade fell away steadily as the English, after 1759, controlled the maritime connections of the city. The trade to Bengal was reduced for the same reason and the Dutch establishments along the Coromandel coast as also elsewhere in India including Cochin, which had virtually lost all its trade by the 1790's, were all handed to the English by the end of the eighteenth century.

That was also the case with the Dutch establishments in Sri Lanka, but it will be useful to notice an important characteristic of developments in the trade and politics of that island. In the seventeenth century, Rijkloff van Goens had thought it possible that the centre of Dutch power could be moved from Batavia to Colombo with the eastern and western Indian coasts closest to the island held in force. This was a vision which Baron Van Imhof wished to revive in the 1740's. The fact was that it never had much chance of success, specially as Dutch territorial commitments grew in Java. But the Dutch, in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did attempt to control the trade of Sri Lanka in a large way, indicating a political determination which was in line with the vision of an alternative Batavia at Colombo. And in this attempt Dutch Sri Lanka ran up against the trade of the Indian Ocean roadstead and lost. Coastal networks bringing rice from Bengal or cowries from the Maldives and areca nut from Malabar would not be controlled by politics. It is true that cinnamon remained a monopoly and the finer spices of the Moluccas had been cornered. But in the common man's trade where merchants were retailers with access to the peasant, the same kind of control did not work. When the British moved into Colombo at the end of the century, the trade and politics of Sri Lanka had demonstrated that in the exchange of the roadstead was the last stand of the Indian and Asian maritime merchant.

The withdrawal of the Dutch from the trade to Japan would take us back to the high trade of Asia. They had an advantage over all other rivals in the permission to have a trading establishment at Deshima (Nagasaki) in the closed country ever since the 1640's. They had thus acted as a link between the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Japan. They had also brought in a substantial amount of silver and gold from the island kingdom which unfortunately decreased in the early eighteenth century, as mining declined in Japan and coinage was devalued. The Tokugawa government restricted the export of the precious metals and the Dutch fell back upon Japanese copper. Till the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Japanese copper had its principal export market in India and Persia through the mediation of the Dutch. But Dutch trade to Japan declined swiftly in the second half of the eighteenth century, till in the 1790's the Shoguns only permitted one ship in a year.

By the close of the eighteenth century, when the Dutch Company had more or less withdrawn from the commercial navigation of most of the Indian Ocean, losing in the process, as we shall directly notice even the control of the Straits of Malacca. The profits of the trade in Asia had, in the seventeenth century, been the major strength for the Company, and as late as 1684-5, Batavia had paid twenty seven million guilders to its principals in Amsterdam. But that was the last of such largesse and the trend, reversed since then, had seen the exhaustion of all Asian profits by 1725. In the years which followed, the Europe trade supported the Company's trade in Asia. Establishment costs in Asia had risen steeply and the revenue had been more and more derived from non-commercial sources as the Company became the ruler of Java. Dutchmen in Java, like Englishmen in Bengal, made their money out of politics but unlike them they did not use this money to expand their trade. In fact, the basic distinction between the private trade of the Englishman serving the Company and his Dutch counterpart had always been that while the former supplemented the effort of his employers while cheating them of a possible revenue the latter only cheated.

It was the Englishman breaking out from the folds of the Indian structure and developing a trade openly along with that of the Company who transformed the commerce of the Indian Ocean in the later eighteenth century. We must notice that in so doing he was for the first time linking the Europe trade with the trade of the Indian Ocean, allowing the Company to borrow his profits at Canton and repaying him in London. The distinction as between the two trades now begin to break down. But before considering some of the impact of the development of English private trade in the eastern Indian Ocean, let us note that Batavia failed to take advantage of the growing China trade which was far more at its doorsteps than to the counting house on the Ganga. Batavia, from its inception, had been a Chinese city and it was in a position to draw on the trade of the archipelago for feeding the demands at Canton. But when Dutch ships from Batavia at last arrived to trade at that Chinese port in 1734, the English, trading since 1701, were already well established. Payments at Canton had to be made in silver, while Batavia knew an easier way out in its junk trade and paying the junks in pepper. The tea trade was therefore never vigorously pursued, while on the other hand Batavia with its suspicions of the visiting merchant never grew into a metropolis of oceanic commerce as Surat had done.

The Englishman turning more and more towards the eastern ocean in the later eighteenth century entered a world which had lost its cohesion but not its vitality. The single most important new factor in the Malay-Indonesian world during the eighteenth century were the Bugis from southern Celebes. In the later seventeenth century, the Dutch had fought strenuous campaigns in the area to block the important spice trade of Macassar. Arung Palakka, the great Buginese leader of Bone, had supported them splendidly and later after the overthrow of his enemies, the Macassarese of the kingdom of Gowa, had built his own domain, defying traditional norms, scattering opponents among whom were Bugis of other tribes. Such men had dispersed over the archipelago, trying their luck in Java, in Borneo and eventually in the Straits of Malacca. There they infiltrated the newly prosperous capital Riau of the sultan of Johor and had spread further into settlements like Selangor and Linggi in the neighbourhood. For much of the eighteenth century, Riau in the control of the Bugis, was the major centre of trade and religious culture in the Malay world. The Bugis were fierce warriors and Malay rulers sought them eagerly as mercenaries. They were wideranging merchants and their *praus* linked the Moluccas with the Malacca Straits. As they demonstrated their prowess and their skill to the discomfiture of Malay and Minangkabau opponents from Sumatra, the *orang laut* or the sea-people of the Malay system lost their traditional position. These *orang lauts* had attached themselves to Malay courts especially to the court of Malacca-Johor as that was pre-eminent among the Malay royal lines. The assassination of Sultan Mahmud of Johor by the Bendahara of the kingdom, in 1699, had shaken the allegience of the *orang laut* who never felt the same towards the new dynasty the Bendahara established. In this somewhat detached position, they saw their power further eroded by the newly arrived Bugis who could do everything they had traditionally done, only better. The only function the *orang laut* usefully retained in the Malay world was that of gathering sea-products for the China trade. They dispersed to the morasses of eastern Sumatra; they found a home for themselves on an island in the China Sea: many of them remained reluctantly with Riau-Johor; but wherever they were they sank into poverty, primitive living and insignificance. Many of them took to piracy which was not controlled by attachment to any Malay court. In the misfortunes of the *orang laut* during the eighteenth century we see the indisputable decline of a people honoured in Malay tradition.

The Bugis themselves would occasionally turn pirate and so would the fierce Macassarese who had dispersed with them. Bugi piracy increased towards the close of the century when they lost the home at Riau. A further kind of piracy was that of the *anak rajas* who were traditionally princely dependents on Malay courts, now often forced to fend for themselves. Sea-raiding was traditional occupation of the Malay *anak raja* but, as in the case of the *orang laut*, this kind of raiding had been regulated by the necessities of particular courts and knew some acknowledged limitations. Piracy in the eighteenth century among such people tended to be free from restraints as the system of support broke down and the freely roving princes were difficult to identify. Behind these there were older piracies created in the Malay-Indonesian waters by the restrictions on trade and livelihood imposed by the Dutch. All together these waters were hardly suited to the peaceful Indian ship which, for other reasons, was already restricting trade to the outer edges of the Malay world.

Pirates were obviously less of a problem for the well-armed English vessels although the threat was real enough and much discussed. In their restless quest for tin and pepper to be sold in China they brought a new kind of economic opportunity to the Malay states. The eighteenth century saw the Malays attempting to control the hinterland behind their river-mouth principalities in the hope of gaining land with tin or even perhaps gold. They were also looking for a larger number of people who would help run trades like elephant catching or manage pepper plantations and work in tin mines. A substantial number of Chinese migrated towards Malaya after the massacre of the Chinese in Batavia in 1740. This tragic event however did not impress the court at Peking even if it knew of the tragedy. The Manchus from the 1680's onwards were feeling much more confident and by the 1730's all restrictions on trade with southeast Asia had been lifted. The flow of migrant Chinese to the Malay states, not as traditional merchants, but as miners and planters was an important development of the eighteenth century. Arabs from the Hadramaut were prominent in religious and commercial life as were the Indians at several Malay courts.

These movements of people and fresh economic opportunities remind us that unsettlement was not the only fact in the Malay world. The decline of certain traditionally important factors was however clear enough. Besides the *orang laut*, the Dutch at Malacca saw their control over the straits weaken as the century wore on. The trade of the port decreased steeply and the Dutch held the prosperity of the Buginese centre of Riau responsible for it. All attempts to control the traffic failed and the Bugis very nearly carried the defences of Malacca in an attack in 1756-57 and almost repeated the feat in 1784. But Malacca was saved by the timely arrival of relief each time and Admiral Van Bram's fleet in 1784 overthrew Buginese Riau completely. It did not save Dutch Malacca from its ultimate downfall but it demonstrated the limits of Bugi power. The dispersal of the Bugis from Riau added one more restless group to the potential pirates of the Malay waters.

The Bugis at Riau and elsewhere in Malaya had caused a certain amount of tension in the Malay world; they had occasionally fought among themselves as well. The Malay rulers, now looking for territorial control of tin-producing areas were often at variance with each other. They were further threatened by invasion from the north by the Burmese, under king Bodawpaya, or the Thais, under king Rama I. Many of the Malay rulers saw the Englishmen as possible allies in these many-pronged conflicts and that was how Captain Light received the island of Penang from Sultan Abdulla of Kedah in 1786. But Kedah was quickly disappointed as the English had no intention of taking part in Malay quarrels which were of no direct concern of theirs. But Penang once ceded soon filled the vacuum left by the dispersal of the Bugis from Riau and the decline of Malacca. Trade in the Malacca Straits came more and more to be drawn to Penang; and this was more so after the English took over Malacca during the war against France in 1795. The days of what has been called the Malay entrepôt state were over.

The establishment of Penang signified a major rearrangement in the Malay world and it would later be followed by that of Singapore. The English had however been exploring possibilities of trade in the Malay-Indonesian world for a long time and many of their efforts had only indifferent success. To the north of this area they had attempted to acquire a base in the Irrawaddy delta but the Mon rebellion in the 1740's and the final downfall of the Toungoo dynasty had for many years put the Irrawaddy complex beyond anything but local trade. It is true that king Alungpaya had overthrown the Mons and established the Konbaungs in Burma and had in fact proceeded to establish the great Irrawaddy port of Rangoon in the middle of eighteenth century but with the seafaring Mons scattered, the area would have to wait for a new system before take-off.

In a sense the Irrawaddy venture belonged to a phase of English trading in Asian waters which was superseded after the wars of the middle eighteenth century. The political control of the hinterland gave them a monopoly of opium and a privileged access to the Indian textile market. The private traders added to these the trade in arms. It was this combination which altered the way of living in some parts of the island world. This was clearly seen in the Sulu archipelago which Alexander Dalrymple had attempted to penetrate without opium and arms in the 1760's.There were existing tensions there, as Dalrymple noticed: conflicts as between islands and the larger historical conflict with Spanish Philippines. Dalrymple's successor discarded the scruples about arms and opium. The result was the destruction of the English settlement at Balambangan in 1775 by the Taosug of Jolo, capital of Sulu, because it had supplied arms to its enemies at Mindanao. But Herbert did manage to infect the Taosug society with opium and the later efforts brought in enough small arms to change the character of fighting in the surrounding waters as the *praus* were fitted with cannon. The thrust of English trade remained towards China and they used Sulu as a wayside-halt to pick up sea-products for the Canton market. But the local society was deeply disturbed. This unsettlement may also have contributed to the rise of the dreaded Ilanun piracy based in Sulu which added one more argument for Indian shipping to stay away from these waters without the protection of British arms.

The English private merchant sailed freely in Indonesian waters because the Dutch had given them this freedom in the Treaty of Paris of 1783.This same peace of course had recognized the independence of the United States, and American ships appeared in the Indian Ocean to claim a trade now open to them. The first American ship to voyage to Canton was from Philadelphia, the *Empress of China* in 1784; but the ships of Elias Hasket Derby of Salem, Massachusetts, were soon upon the trail and sailing all over the ocean with their base at Ile de France (Mauritius). This island had been the single most important contribution of France to the Indian Ocean. La Bourdonnais had built it up in the 1740's as a base against the English in India but it had grown a logic of development all its own and had drawn closer to east Africa and had become a support for slave trade in the western Indian Ocean. Derby's ships stopped at Port Louis in Ile de France and then fanned out to Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Canton. At the same time an important American connection grew with Sumatra and its trade in pepper. The Americans brought mainly Spanish dollar for the trade of the Indian Ocean, besides some small amount of wine, provisions and naval stores for the European settlements, and they took away textiles, pepper, sugar and gunny bags. The trade to Canton was important but the trade to Calcutta was equally so. In the year 1800, 24 vessels cleared for the United States from Calcutta while Canton saw the departure of 23.

The arrival of American shipping in the Indian Ocean reinforced the impression of the mingling of the oceans. Henceforth it is idle to study the Indian Ocean in isolation and it is clear that the character of the commerce had changed far more in the last hundred years than in the two hundred years previously. The main change had been in the hinterland on the subcontinent of India where ties of dependence had grown and now supported a fleet which relied considerably on the profits of successful politics.The traditional Mughal system which fed the earlier shipping had broken down and the alternatives before the merchant and the weaver had disappeared. The agency house in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay was a new thing and considerable advance on the older manner of trading. The English military officer and civil servant could now invest what Professor P. J. Marshall calls their substantial savings in trade and shipping of the Indian Ocean with an impersonal confidence which the Chulia Muslim *nakhoda* and the Bania of Surat still lacked. This was the first real change in the structure of trade which the ocean had known during the centuries with which we deal. This does not mean that tradition had been vanquished, far from it. It would take modernity a long time to penetrate the *hundi* market or to shake the family-ties among Indian businessmen. But by and large tradition had receded from the coasts.

The fellowship upon the ocean had been broken. The three mast ship of European rigging was now sharply to be distinguished from the *praus* of the Bugis or the *baghla* of the Arab. The high trade of the sea was firmly in European hands and the Indian and Asian had receded to the roadsteads. The country trader of the Conrad variety was still some kind of a bridge.

Englishmen were still in the rice trade of Coromandel. The Babus of Calcutta somewhat later, and the Parsis of Bombay at the turn of the nineteenth century still kept company with their white superiors. This would end with the steamship in the high noon of empire.

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Holden Furber, more than anyone else, can claim the eighteenth century as his own in the historiography of the Indian Ocean, although he clung tenaciously to the world of the European enclaves. He was the first to show the importance of private trade in his *John Company at Work* (Harvard, 1948) which demonstrated at the same time how misleading the official archives of the Companies could be. The little gem of a book *Bombay Presidency in the Middle 18th Century* (Bombay, 1963) was a demonstration of the same method. The magisterial summing-up *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient* (Minneapolis, 1976) now rules as the classic treatment of the history of the European Companies in the Indian Ocean. Furber's influence on later historians has been profound and Pamela Nightingale's *Trade and Empire in Western India, 1784-1806* (Cambridge, 1970) is an admirable example of a historian trying to understand the rise of Bombay in terms of Private interests. P. J. Marshall's *East India Fortunes, The British in Bengal in the 18th Century* (Oxford, 1976) is a masterly account of the rise and development of the Calcutta fleet, without venturing far into the Indian world.

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younger generation. Sushil Chaudhuri's *Trade and Commercial Organization in Bengal, 1650-1720* (Calcutta, 1975) should be singled out for its handling of English documents so that something of the Indian world comes through. The temper of the study is however not stained by nationalism. In the manner I have handled the eighteenth century for this collection, I discover an anaemic echo of the lusty emotion which was Sinha's. Gautam Bhadra is less inhibited and in his paper 'Social Groups and Relations in the Town of Murshidabad, 1765-1793', *Indian Historical Review*, vol. 2, 2(1976), pp.312-38, reviews much recent literature and emphasizes what I have called the growth of dependence in the hinterland. The search after the Indian world has gained much from the two volumes by Maharajkumar S.C. Nandy, *The Life and Times of Cantoo Baboo, Banian of Warren Hastings* (Bombay, 1978 and Calcutta, 1981) in which he has used some of his own family papers. K.M. Mohsin, *A Bengal District in Transition: Murshidabad, 1765-1793* (Dacca, 1973) has been a useful addition to our knowledge.

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Sixteenth Century Malabar and the Indian Ocean

Genevieve Bouchon

Malabar is the name given by Arab sailors to Kerala—land of the Chera emperors—which extends along the western coast of India, from Mangalore to Cape Comorin. Its borders are determined by the coastline and the inland relief. Throughout the region the Ghats stand out like a jagged wall covered with forests and interspersed with passes leading to Deccan and the Tamil country. Thus Malabar was more exposed to outside influences than any other region in the subcontinent.

The monsoon winds dictated the economic life of the region by subjecting its ports to periods of activity and months of isolation, bringing ships from Africa, Arabia and Persia to its shores. Malabar in the sixteenth century was marked by the intrusion of a new group of people, the Portuguese. The confrontation between the Portuguese and the coastal Muslim was the main subject matter of the local historical manuals. The Portuguese however were not the only factors contributing to the fate of Malabar. The Indian peninsula was at this time the stage of political and religious unrest from which the southern states did not entirely escape. Consequently this study should be made within the broader context of the history of Deccan and the oceanic region as a whole.

The written sources available to us concerning the maritime history of this period are mostly Portuguese. They consist of socio-economic treatises, chronicles and thousands of manuscripts of every description kept in Portugal, Goa and Rome. The most significant treatises were those of Duarte Barbosa and Tome Pires. Important chronicles were written by Castanheda, Gois, Correia, Barros and Couto.

The works of Duarte Barbosa and Tome Pires were written around 1515, whereas the chronicles were all compiled later and published after 1550. But the latter are based on original documents, sometimes on personal experience in India. All should be considered within the context of a comparative study, and with reference to archives.

Despite their abundance and remarkable precision, these Portuguese documents are limited to texts for the most part functional, but which record economic facts not retained by Indian historiography. These texts are marked by a suspicious prejudice against Islam, and medieval mistrust of Hinduism, and explain socio-religious facts only through chance remarks. However, the accounts of Italian, Dutch and French observers as well as the correspondence of missionaries supplement the Portuguese accounts.

Only the Arabic chronicle written by Zainuddin at the end of the sixteenth century contradicts the Lusitanian accounts. But even this is the work of a *pardesi*[1] or foreigner, who acted as interpreter for his fellows, and leaves us in some doubt as to the reactions of the Hindus. Fortunately, the Portuguese archives hold a good deal of unpublished letters written by the Malabar kings which reveal their political attitude in a different light. The traditional Malayali and Sanskrit chronicles—*Keralotpatti* and *Keralamahatyam*—contain legendary accounts. But at the same time reveal the traditions and behaviour of the people. The literary texts such the *kavyas* and the *northern ballads* give some insight into the organization of the society.

Much of the archaeological and numismatic remains are undiscovered, but a lot of the inscriptions have been deciphered and published. Taken from temples, tanks, Muslim tombs and mosques, they reveal dates and traces of social groups.

Kingdoms, society and trade at the beginning of the sixteenth century

Malabar was divided into various kingdoms after the fall of the Kulasekhara empire at the end of the eleventh century. The four main Hindu sovereigns gathered round them lords of less importance. The Zamorin of Ernad had the greatest temporal power, but the royal family of Venad carried the greatest prestige. The Kolathiri of Eli, who had an alliance with the latter, kept an eye on the northern borders. The king of Perumpadappunad held a lesser position, probably resulting from his rivalry with the Zamorin. Portuguese writers refer to these kingdoms by the names of their main cities: Calicut, Kollam, Cannanore and Cochin.

The confusion of stone inscriptions makes it impossible to define the territorial limits of these states. Besides the endless wars between noblemen, the capturing and the recapturing of the cities, the inconsistency of the alliances, prevented the drawing of a political map until the arrival of the Portuguese. Although the details they give us are limited to the coastal cities and the events in which they participated, we are nonetheless able to make an outline sketch of the boundaries by using the main rivers as landmarks. To the north, the territory under the Kolathiri lay between Nilesvaram and the Tellicherry river; the Zamorin's zone of influence stretched from the left bank of the same river to Cranganore, which was disputed by the king of Cochin. The latter ruled the lagoon district which connected the Periyar river to the Vembanad lake. The royal family of Venad shared the government of Kollam and Cape Comorin provinces which covered an area encompassing the southern part of the Tamil country as far the Tambraparni delta.

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[1] Cf. *supra,* p.59

Around each of these kings revolved the accan and kaimal,[2] lesser lords, blood relatives or dependents. It is difficult to define the links of dependence which united, for example the raja of Tanor to the Zamorin, or the raja of Porakkad (Porca) to the king of Cochin. It is even more difficult to show that the rajas of Travancore were of the same family as the Venad princes. According to the dynastic matrilineary law, the first born male of all the united branches was brought to the supreme sovereignty, but this did not prevent the kings from favouring their own children and from bestowing on them entire provinces. These parallel descendants were responsible for the splitting up of the kingdoms and conflicts provoked by the endless disputes.

The royal families of Malabar were linked to each other by traditional ties, kept alive by the legends of Parasurama[3] and Cheraman Perumal.[4] The Zamorins of Calicut relied on the latter, but their traditions, relatively recent, could not compete with the dynastic prestige of the Kollam princes and the Eli kings. Both were Ksatriya, and these families were united by common rites and cults. By contrast, the Cochin royal family was held at a distance by these dynasties, although the polity of the Mappilla guilds, then that of the Portuguese authorities, created a superficial network of common interest between Cochin and Cannanore. However, the periodic wars which set Calicut and Cochin against one another, forced the Kolathiri into a reserve made all the more cautious by certain obligations which linked him to the Zamorin. These obligations were reinforced by the fear aroused all along the Malabar coast, by the armed *paraos* and spies of Calicut.

The security of the Calicut port and its exemplary organization meant that the Zamorins were able to exercise their influence over the entire country. They became masters of the religious centre of Tirunavai, seat of the *Mamakam*, the most popular pilgrimage in Kerala. The ancient rivalry which set him against the Cochin raja had been revived at the beginning of the fifteenth century by the dispute surrounding the heritage of the Edappalli rajas. An endemic war, interspersed by devastating raids, brought about the downfall of the Cochin raja. The Zamorin had forced him to pay tribute and had seized from him Cranganore, the ancient capital of the Chera emperors.

In order to understand how the government offices were run, it is worth sketching the political structures of Kerala in the face of the Portuguese activities and the rise of Muslim power. The letters written by the Malabar kings kept in the Portuguese archives are proof of their close attachment to traditional roles: keepers of the laws and social order, protectors of Brahmins and cows. It seems that their sovereignty was performed within their family grouping where the *tampuratti*, the first born princesses were all-powerful. The words of *Arthashastra*, according to which 'princes are like crabs and eat their parents'[5] illustrate perfectly the precarious nature of the position of the raja, whose sovereignty could be questioned by members of his own family whenever he was found to have failed in his honour. This rivalry of his brothers was particularly dangerous. Around the king there was nearly always a prince conspiring in secret to win favour with the Portuguese authorities.

The king's immediate entourage was dominated by the *purohita*, the raja's personal Brahmin and guarantor of his legitimacy. Some dignitaries, generally recruited from selected families, assumed administrative responsibilities, taking orders from a prime minister aided by secretaries and scribes. Each province was administered by a *natuvari*, sometimes chosen, as in Cannanore, from among the members of the royal family. He received a large share of the tax on profits as well as the loot taken during maritime expeditions.

There are no contemporary documents giving details of the composition and power of local government which played a part in the exercise of justice and in certain consultations. On the other hand, much is known about the dominant role played by the military castes. The Portuguese appear to have confused the Cevakars and the Nayars. The Nayars were the king's guards, and they were rewarded with considerable privileges for services rendered during the medieval wars. Educated from a very young age in military academies (*kalari*), they knew how to handle a spear, a bow and arrow and occasionally an arquebus. Armed at all times with a sword and dagger, they fought on foot, protected by a round shield, but were also highly accomplished jousters. These élite warriors were often assisted by sections from the Mappilla guard. Dressed in red linen haquetons, they were good archers and were also able to handle cannon. During the course of the sixteenth century more and more of them came to participate in the actions of maritime war.

The presence of the Portuguese in the Malabar waters should not detract from the seriousness of other problems troubling its rulers. Despite its own dynastic crisis, Vijayanagar was continually making its prsence felt along the borders of Kerala. Its sovereigns interfered in the affairs of Eli, and even aroused a respectful fear in the Zamorin. Only the Kollam princes dared to face them in open war to dispute the control of the Tamil country.

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[2] Accan and kaimal: Nayar chiefs.

[3] Vishnu's *avatara*, who made the reclamation of Kerala from the sea and organized the peopling of the land. cf. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, I., pp. 221-226

[4] The legendary last Chera emperor, who embraced Islam and went to Arabia where he died. The oldest written account of this legend was made by Duarte Barbosa, 2, pp. 3-5.

[5] *The Kautiliya Arthashastra* (Bombay, 1960-65), —2, p. 44

It is not necessary here to give a further description of the spice trade.[6] It is enough to point out the importance of Kerala in the traffic of these goods. Situated in a pepper and ginger growing area, its ports also distributed Sri Lankan cinnamon and Moluccan spices. The best ginger was harvested in the Calicut area. Although the Eli pepper was scarce, its quality was superior to that grown in the south. Pepper was harvested in large quantities on the lower slopes of the mountains, in the interior lands of the lords—for example the land owned by the raja of Vadakkumkur whom the Portuguese called *Rey da Pimenta*. The dowager queens of Kollam owned their own pepper growing lands.

Each year, at the end of December, ten to twenty ships sailed from Calicut and its satellite ports to the Red Sea, loaded with spices and cloth. Some traders undertook the journey twice a year, in February and in October, thereby increasing their profits substantially. But the goods exported to the west formed only a small part of the trade. The Malabar ports were not only pepper warehouses, but also the calling points in a large eastern circuit. Each year the Malabar traders went to Pulicat where they embarked for Malacca on the Coromandel merchant ships. Kollam took part in a maritime traffic which linked the ports of Sri Lanka, the Pearl Fishery Coast, Pegu, Tenasserim and Siam.

Most of Kerala's Indian trade was undertaken by sea, with the exception of precious stones and a certain amount of pepper which was carried by convoys of oxen to Vijayanagar and other northern regions. From September to April, *sambuks* and *almadias* sailed the length of the coast carrying as far as Dabhol, Chaul, Bassein, Diu, Surat and the ports of Coromandel products not only from Kerala, but also from the western world: copper, vermilion, coral, rose water and mercury. The merchants of Calicut and Cochin would go to Sri Lanka to fetch cinnamon, while the Cannanore traders brought back from the Maldive archipelago copra and rigging which they supplied to the shipowners of Calicut and Cambay. These products were accompanied by innumerable others: wax, areca nut, betel, indigo, dyes, spices, perfumes and drugs for consumption inland.

The trade in foodstuffs rendered all the ports along the coast active. The produce from their coconut palms and fields alone was not sufficient to feed the people of Kerala whom the Chinese accused of being too indolent to cultivate rice. This natural disposition and probable agricultural difficulties, kept them dependent on Vijayanagar. Vijayanagar owed its power not only to the force of arms, but also to the possession of fertile land, which was sown every year by order of the king and was carefully cultivated, and brought the kingdom considerable duties in gold. The rice routes followed the course of the main rivers to the western coast. The ports of Banda, Mirjan, Honavar (Onore), Bhatkal, Barkur, Basrur, Mangalore and Kumblah welcomed the craft of the Malabar merchants, loaded with coconuts, palm oil and wine.

The traders of Cannanore and Dharmapatam played an important part in this traffic and supplied mainly the Maldive Islands and Calicut. From Tanor to Cape Comorin, the Mappilla merchants of Cochin controlled another rice route from Coromandel, Orissa, Bengal and Sumatra. During the good season, the *almadias* sailed along the coast and carried rice as far as Calicut and Sri Lanka. It was generally transported with sugar, grown mainly in the Canara region, dried vegetables from Gujarat, or fruit from the south; fish, either smoked or dried in the sun, was imported from the Maldive archipelago by the merchants of Cannanore.

Almost all vessels carried some kinds of cloth along with various other goods. The merchants of Cochin and Cannanore commissioned ships to fetch cloth, in exchange of spices, from Chaul and the ports of Gujarat. Textiles from Bengal, which, like those of Coromandel, were of finer quality, often accompanied shiploads of rice.

The trade in horses, for which Vijayanagar paid in pardaos,[7] made little difference to Kerala, but gave Cannanore all its importance. At the southern end of the areas to which these horses were imported, Cannanore together with Honavar and Bhatkal, provided cavalry replacements for Vijayanagar and probably also for the princes of Venad. We do not know to what extent rice, which these same ports supplied to Hormuz, was used as exchange money, but it is certain that it was in Hormuz that the Cannanore merchants negotiated these war horses. They also controlled the transport of elephants from Sri Lanka which were shipped by Cochin vessels to Cambay.

The mercantile society which the Portuguese discovered was fairly complex. Three features characterized it: the importance of foreign communities, the specialization of certain groups and the predominance of the Muslims.

We will not list here all the autonomous castes which played a more or less direct role in trade. It seems that certain Nayars, who gave no hint of the changes which they later underwent, participated in commercial profit-making. Many of them cultivated their lands.

The Gujaratis were present in the Kerala ports in which they had their own districts, particularly in Calicut, where they inherited vast warehouses built for the Chinese. Chetties, a caste from Coromandel, controlled the market in coral and precious stones. Their guilds existed in Kerala well

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[6] Cf. *infra*, Chapter 3

[7] Pires, p. 362; Varthema, p. 171.

before the advent of Islam. In Kollam, they were money-changers, bankers and goldsmiths. In Kayal, they controlled the trade in pearls, although the fishing trade was contracted to a Muslim who received duties therefrom which he gave to the principal raja of Venad.

The ancient merchant communities seemed to be on the decline. Jews did not appear to be particularly prosperous. A few of them lived in the old port of Matayi which in the past their ancestors had made rich with gifts. Some others much despised had remained in Cranganore, from where many had fled at the time of the Periyar flood to Cochin. Jews seem to have deserted Kollam where their guild had once been powerful.

Although received with reserve by the Christians of Malabar, the Portuguese showed great interest in the activities of their church. Consequently, in their records the Portuguese tended to describe the rites and way of life of the Christians rather than their role in economic life. In 1501 Cabral was to bring back to Lisbon Joseph of Cranganore who revealed the importance of the Christian community established in this city. It rivalled that of the community of Kayankullam which included important pepper merchants such as Mathias, who loaded the Portuguese vessels in 1503 and 1504. In Calicut, the Christians were numerous enough for the Zamorin to have granted them an audience room. However, it was in Kollam, the centre of their oldest parishes, that one could note signs of their decline.

The sixteenth century saw the Kerala Muslims at the height of their power. 'All the merchants of the seas are Muslims' wrote Tome Pires. And Varthema, added that 'the Gentiles did not sail'. Muslim communities, foreign and autochthonous, were scattered among the coastal ports. But in Calicut, described by various authors as the premier marketplace of the Indian Ocean, their diversity could be seen in its entirety.

They were dominated by *pardesis* who controlled external trade. The foreign merchant had a privileged status in Calicut. On arrival, he had at his disposal a Nayar to guard and serve him, a Chetty to look after his possessions, and a broker to get goods for him. He had to pay them a fixed monthly salary. And this was supplemented by commissions paid to them by the suppliers.

Since external trade was in the hands of the Gujaratis and foreign traders, the Mappilla held a minor position in Calicut. Recognizable by their long beards and round hats, they were speculators, brokers or forwarding agents. However, they dominated the other coastal cities.

In Cochin, a powerful Mappilla family controlled the world of business. Each of its members bore the title Marakkar, which had probably been granted to them by the king. In 1504, they were divided into two clans, Cherian Marakkar and his brothers, and Mạmali Marakkar and his brothers, both closely associated. They would both go to the Malacca emporium for the spices of the archipelago and to Sri Lanka for elephants

and cinnamon. As early as 1504, and for more than ten years, they gathered the pepper cargoes for the Portuguese vessels. This pepper was collected in the foothills of the inland mountains where their agents bartered it for rice brought back from Coromandel. Cherian Marakkar was associated with the Gujarati trade, since he was the agent of Malik Ayaz, governor of Diu.

At that time, the Eli kingdom witnessed an original kind of association between the Hindu king and Muslim sea merchants. The traditions of the powerful Islamic Arakkal family were linked to those of the royal family. In the first quarter of the sixteenth century a member of this family, whom the Portuguese referred to as *Mamale, regedor do mar*[8] and who was in fact the ancestor of the Ali Rajas, was the head of the Cannanore Muslim community. He collected the maritime commercial profits and fixed the price of spices, holding back the Kolathiri's share. He armed his own fleet, and that of the *paraos* which were to defend it. Through the influence he had over the king of Kotte, he held a privileged position in Sri Lanka and extended his rule to the Maldive archipelago where he collected tribute for himself.

Other ports of lesser importance also had prominent Mappilla communities. Pantalayini-Kollam had fallen under the influence of the Zamorins of Calicut, which still harboured the remains of one of the most ancient Muslim centres. The fortified city of Ponnani was the residence of the spiritual leader of the Mappilla, and the centre of the Koranic school. The city had over eight thousand Muslim inhabitants, whose activities ensured the Zamorin a substantial income.

The leading Muslims were in constant touch with the Nayar dignitaries with whom they sometimes attended royal councils. The lower class Nayar hired out their services to businessmen; the guards looked after their goods and the secretaries offered their accounting talents. Banians and Chettys dealt with them. It was, however, at the bottom of the social ladder that the Muslims found their closest fellow workers—among the Moger and the Mukkuvan who were, like them, people of the sea. Some Mogers owned vessels and traded with the Muslims, making profit from them. The Mukkuvan and Tiyan, who belonged to an even lower caste, were at the service of the Islamic community. With the Mappilla, they formed the greater part of the ships crews and maintenance men. These common occupations pushed many of them into being converted to Islam, to escape the royal privilege which allowed the king to seize their possessions. Also, the promiscuity of their daily life and the endogamy law, which forbade women of high caste to marry Muslims, encouraged these people to choose their wives from among the Mukkuvan or Tiyan who were bound by no such restriction.

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[8] 'Governor of the Sea', stands for Ali Raja which in Malayalam means 'King of the High Sea'. Cf. G. Bouchon, *Mamale de Cananor*, p. 36.

It seems that there was a remarkable solidarity among the Kerala Muslims, and this was a unifying factor in a country gripped by the fragmentation of the land. The territorial divisions were in contrast with the mobility of the Muslims for whom the maritime routes knew no frontiers. The kings owned the land, the merchants the seas. This principle prevailed in varying degree over the separation of power between the political authority of the Hindu king and the power of the merchant communities. Initiated in Cannanore at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Islamic society continued to grow. Through the conflicts which set them against the Portuguese, many Muslims assumed military responsibilithes and thus switched their activities from the commercial to the field.

Portuguese Interference and the Mappilla Reaction.

The coastal population of Kerala had no idea of the significance of the arrival, in 1498, of a small fleet of three ships in the waters of Calicut. Despised for having brought the Zamorin presents 'barely worthy of the poorest merchant of Mecca', Vasco da Gama and his companions only succeeded in arousing curiosity. These navigators,who possessed no gold, had just accomplished one of the greatest nautical exploits in history, motivated by the desire to find 'Christians and spices'[9] in India. Believing the Zamorin to be Christian, they came seeking his alliance and privileged place in the spice market. Both these objectives implied the elimination of the Muslims from the Indian Ocean. Received by the Zamorin with courtesy, they were soon discredited by the *pardesi* of the Mediterranean basin, whose secular rivalry opposed them. Transferred to Asia, this rivalry was one of the causes of the initial misunderstandings between them.

On da Gama's return to Lisbon, a more prestigious expedition was prepared. In September 1500, a fleet, well-equipped with artillery as well as goods and valuable presents, entered the port of Calicut under the command of Pedro Alvares Cabral. Though the start was promising, the Portuguese welcome in Calicut was short-lived. Demanding to be served first, before the Red Sea merchants, they provoked the hostility of the *pardesi*, although the Mappilla, a minority group in Calicut, were more favourably disposed to them. It is difficult to know to what extent imprudence, linguistic misunderstanding and perfidy led to the pillage by the Portuguese of a *sambuk*, but this action provoked an attack on the factory. About forty Portuguese were massacred while fleeing to the ships. As an act of reprisal the port was burnt and the town bombarded for a whole day.

This dramatic incident naturally pleased those frustrated by the hegemony of Calicut. While the Cochin king was receiving Pedro Alvares Cabral, Kollam and Cannanore sent emissaries. Thus, the expedition of 1500 was to have long-term effects. When Cabral left India, the die was cast. In Calicut hostilities were rife, and in Eli, Cochin and Venad interests aroused.

[9] A. Velho, *Diario*, p. 40.

Carried by each monsoon, the Portuguese persevered and withstood the perilous crossing to collect spices. In 1501, Joao de Nova succeeded in building a factory in Cannanore. The following year, Vasco da Gama returned to Malabar to fix the price of spices, and demand reparation from the Zamorin for the damages caused by the 1500 incident. In Cochin and Cannanore, his commercial dealings were successful, [10] but his intransigence put a seal on the break with Calicut.

The hospitality offered to the Portuguese delegation by the raja of Cochin gave the Zamorin a pretext to revive the war and invade his rival's kingdom. But, rather than hand over the few Portuguese entrusted to his protection, the raja of Cochin took refuge on the sacred island of Vaipin with his proteges. The situation turned to his advantage with the arrival of Francisco and Afonso de Albuquerque. The latter with a few lightning raids, drove out the Calicut troops and returned to the king of Cochin his lands and rights. These two captains left Cochin with a defence reflecting their limited resources: a small wooden fort, two caravels and several hundred men commanded by Duarte Pacheco. His audacious strategy held the Calicut armies in check until the arrival of Lopo Soares, who retook Cranganore for the king of Cochin and, in the water of Kappatt, destroyed the fleet which was on its way to the Red Sea.

These events cemented the alliance of those whose interests were threatened by the Portuguese intervention. Enlivened by the merchant communities, this movement which extended from Venice to Kerala, was supported by the Zamorin of Calicut and the sultan of Cairo who was stirred into action by the small size of the spice cargoes.[11] He used the diplomatic influence he had in Europe to try and dissuade the Portuguese from pursuing their enterprise, but he failed in his efforts. Nevertheless, he prepared to arm a fleet manned by the formidable warriors known as the *Rumes*,[12] whose arrival was expected each year on the shores of India to eliminate the Portuguese.

During this time, the framework of a Portuguese *Estado da India*—state

[10] According to the Cochin agreement (Jan. 1503), pepper and other spices must be exchanged with gold and copper from the West.

[11] In 1497, 35000 *cantari* of spices were bought by the Venetians in Alexandria. 38590 *cantari* of spices were bought by the Venetians in Beirut.
In 1504, no spices in Alexandria, not in Aleppo and Beirut.
In 1505, 11 600 *cantari* of spices bought by the Venetians in Alexandria. 12000 *cantari* of spices bought by the Venetians in Aleppo.
From Godinho, *Economie*, p. 771 (1 *cantar*-c. 50 kg.)

[12] Warriors of Turkish origin, recruited in Anatolia for the Mamluk army.

of India—was being set up in Lisbon. Its first viceroy, Francisco de Almeida, commanded the armada of 1505. The Portuguese presence henceforth became permanent. In order to reserve for the Crown the monopoly of the spice trade, a squadron was to patrol the coast, fortresses were to be erected at Cannanore and Cochin, and no ship was to be allowed to sail without Portuguese *cartaz*.[13] The spice trade to the Red Sea was forbidden, but it was tolerated at Hormuz.

Each year in March, four or five carracks of the *Carreira da India* would leave Lisbon. These carracks were loaded with gold and silver coins, lead, copper and quicksilver, vermilion and coral, black velvet from Genoa and scarlet from Florence. They called at Sofala to purchase ivory and additional gold, and generally arrived in Cannanore in the beginning of September, thereafter going to Kollam, Kayankullam and Cochin. After loading spices and goods previously collected by Portuguese factors and Malabar traders: pepper, cinnamon from Sri Lanka, cloves and nutmeg from Insulindia, medicinal plants and pearls, they returned to Cannanore in January to load ginger, dried fish and rice, and from there they then set sail for Lisbon.

During these first years, the opposition to the Portuguese presence was more apparent in the ports of Eli, probably because the Mappilla community of Cannanore was at that time the strongest in Malabar. The building of the fortress caused some unrest which was serious enough to provoke a severe warning from the Raya of Vijayanagar, who threatened to exterminate the Islamic community which he had only spared because it 'stabled some of his horses'. It is difficult to uncover the reasons for Raya Narasimha's interest in the Portuguese to whom he had sent an embassy, but his involvement throws light on the division of the ruling classes of Eli. While the Kolathiri conducted a difficult policy of conciliation, the Muslim leaders were resolved to destroy the fortress. An act of piracy for which Goncalo Vaz de Gois was found guilty, gave them the pretext and, during the monsoon of 1507, the fort was besieged with the help of the Nayars, but it was saved by the tenacity of its garrison.

The Muslims' hope was soon revived by the rumours, later confirmed, that the *Rumes* were on their way. But the Mamluk fleet, commanded by Mir Hussain could not reach the shores of Malabar. Subtle negotiations were undertaken between Francisco de Almeida and Malik Ayaz, governor of Diu, which terminated in Mir Hussain's fleet being defeated within sight of the town in 1509. The survivors took refuge in the neighbouring ports.

The documents kept in Lisbon enable us to learn about the conditions under which the Portuguese lived during their first encounters with the inhabitants of Malabar. The receipts of innumerable presents bear testimony to the relations which were formed between the newcomers and the indigenous population. Some learnt Malayalam, as did Duarte Barbosa, who had the honour of being befriended by a Kolathiri. But, apart from some exceptional cases, the Portuguese remained alienated from the Hindu population. In their letters to Dom Manuel, the kings of Malabar would complain that the Portuguese butchered cows and took Nayars with them on long sea voyages. Moreover, the social order was disrupted by the egalitarian tendencies of Christianity which drove the low caste converts to abandon their duties within the Hindu community. The Portuguese did not take their wives overseas, and they married low caste Hindu women after they had been baptized. This was the origin of the thatched villages which were soon grouped around the fortresses, and in which a new generation of Portuguese subjects, born of Indian mothers, grew up.

In business matters, the collaboration of interests created other ties. In Cochin and even in Cannanore, the sea merchants accepted Portuguese help which protected them from attack by pirates who lay in ambush along the routes to Cambay. These expeditions provided the opportunity for fruitful business dealings for both . Towards the end of his term of office, Dom Francisco and his entourage became aware of the need to conciliate the business circles, and to incorporate Lisbon interests with the traditional exchanges, rather than conduct a policy of conquest.

Afonso de Albuquerque succeeded Francisco de Almeida at the end of 1509. Some times later, while on his way to subdue Hormuz, he was informed by the pirate Timoji of the death of the Sabayo of Goa and he decided to seize the town. There was great surprise all along the coast, at the news that Goa, the horse trading port, disputed by the Bahmanid princes and the Rayas of Vijayanagar, had definitely fallen into the hands of the Portuguese (25 November 1510). Albuquerque had calculated that there was more to be gained from the possession of a stronghold than relying on the alliances of Malabar kings and lords. This choice turned away the Portuguese from Kerala for a time. Two turbulent factions were formed: Albuquerque and his group who wanted to give Portugal an empire, and the veterans of the Malabar fortresses who were slowly becoming Indianized and thought it wiser to become part of the inter-Asiatic commercial network.

Albuquerque put into practice an elaborate plan to consolidate his dominance in a few key positions over a large area which would give the Portuguese control over the whole Indian Ocean traffic. The submission of Hormuz and Goa gave them control of the horse trade and a guaranteed clientele in Vijayanagar. Malacca, conquered in July 1511, shipped products of the archipelago and southeast Asia to them. Albuquerque was convinced that it would be more profitable to spread the goods of Malacca throughout the Indian Ocean rather than transport them to Lisbon. Therefore, he wished to keep only one stronghold in Malabar, provided it

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[13] Pass issued by a Portuguese authority, mentioning the description of the ships, its crew and cargo. Any ship without *cartaz* was confiscated and sometimes destroyed.

was the most important one—the time had come to renegotiate a fortress in Calicut.

After Goa was captured, the Zamorin made several peace overtures which were considered. In spite of the indignation expressed by the Kolathiri, the king of Cochin and certain Portuguese agents, a peace treaty was signed in December 1513.

It appears that the first conflicts which led the Portuguese to oppose the Muslims of Malabar were in two phases. Right from the start, the Portuguese came up against the *pardesi* whom they wanted to eliminate from the Indian Ocean and they declared war on Calicut which was their main centre. However, throughout the duration of Francisco de Almeida's government, the Portuguese did not stop dealing with the Mappilla, the Marakkar of Cochin, and more dangerously, with the Muslim leaders of Cannanore. It was Albuquerque's conquests and the new situation which these conquests brought about, which confirmed the break of interests which had, until then, bound the Mappilla of Malabar to their Portuguese customers. By giving Goa a position of monopoly and choosing to make an alliance with Calicut, Albuquerque dispossessed Cannanore of trade in horses and ginger, and let the Cochin market fall into neglect. The Portuguese then had to cope with the declared resistance of the Mappilla leaders.

Having been badly affected by the Portuguese policy, Mamale of Cannanore was able to profit from the new conditions it created. Numerous ships, coming from southeast Asia, avoided encounters with the armada and made detours around the Malabar ports and made for the Maldive atolls. By securing control of the Maldive islands, Mamale controlled a maritme path to the west and interfered with the Portuguese plan by opening up markets outside their zone of influence. Profiting from the revolutions in the palace of Male, he laid claim to the levy of tribute and other advantages which he undertook to transform into legitimate rights. The execution of these plans was hardly hindered by the threat of Albuquerque, whose dispersed forces could not control the activities of Mamale. Thus it can be said that this ancestor of the Ali Rajas was the only one in Malabar to hold Albuquerque in check.

After Albuquerque died in 1515, his successors carried out a different policy. Lopo Soares and Diogo Lopes de Sequeira both gave priority to the conquest of the Red Sea, but they failed to make the blockade successful. These remote campaigns, and the need to maintain a good army in Goa, which was constantly threatened, left the Malabar fortresses defenceless. They were manned by recruits too young and sometimes incapable of handling arms. The captains were often too greedy for profit to worry about maintaining their alliances, and managing local economic interests.

The mercantile power of Kerala were quick to spot these weaknesses. Rather than participate in the commerce of the Crown, most of the

merchants reached Malacca via Pulicat. The presence of the Portuguese in Calicut caused the Arab and Gujarati ships to avoid Malabar. The Cambay dealers left Gujarat in March carrying Arabian and Persian merchants to Sumatra and the Sunda ports, then returned via the west coast of Sumatra, from where they reached the Maldives after few days. Some returned to the ports of Gujarat directly while others wintered in the archipelago. Here they met merchants of Bengal and Cannanore, the latter bringing products from Malabar and cinnamon from Sri Lanka. In this way, the control of the islands enabled the Ali Raja to use the forsaking of the ports of Kerala to his own advantage.

The Portuguese struggled vainly against these parallel markets. The control of the direct route from Sumatra to the Red Sea continually escaped them. The campaigns directed against the Maldives rarely succeeded in breaking through the labyrinth of the atolls. It was only by exploiting the rivalry of the local princes and sultans that they succeeded in building the fortresses ordered by Dom Manuel at Colombo, Male, Kollam and Pasai. But their lack of men and the weakness of their support meant that they were unable to pose a serious threat to the power of the mercantile communities.

The Muslims of Kerala united together to try and regain their old privileges. The heads of the most powerful Mappilla families armed their own fleets. This movement was to bring about a major change in the local Islamic society which had until that time concentrated its activities in the commercial field. In 1520-1521 instances of reprisal broke out in several areas at the same time. Soon after, the fortresses of Kollam and Colombo were besieged, and the Portuguese were massacred in Sumatra and the Maldives. The conflict between Portugal and Calicut, recommenced in 1524. Secretly armed in the lagoons and estuaries, the Malabar *paraos* besieged the fortress of Calicut which was abandoned by its defenders. This victory revived the spirit of the Muslims who for a time rallied around the Zamorin. The majority of their leaders came from influential Mappilla families. Some of them had been friends of the Portuguese, like Kutti Ali of Tanor and Pate and Cherian Marakkar whose family had provided pepper and cinnamon to the Cochin factory for more than twenty years. Muhammad Marakkar must have been the first to receive from the Zamorin the title of Kunjali under whom the most renowned captains acquired their fame.

Porakkad, Ponnani, Kappatt, Pantalayini, Kollam and Chaliyam offered favourable sites for clandestine activities. Fortified by a double row of redoubts, some of these places held up to 250 pieces of artillery. Each year, a dozen *sambuks* were secretly loaded with spices for the Red Sea, and escorted to the high seas by the *paraos*. These ships were fast small galleys, manned on each side by 20-30 oarsmen. They could carry three or four pieces of artillery and more than one hundred archers or arquebusiers.

They avoided encounters in the open sea where their firearms did not have sufficient range to reach the high-sided Portuguese ships. They preferred to provoke the enemy at the river mouths where the latter came under fire from the redoubts and ran aground in the trap of the estuaries. Only the *paraos* could keep afloat in the sandy channels where, four abreast, they withstood continual fire. The artillery was placed on the bows and reinforced by flaming pots of gunpowder which were thrown onto the Portuguese sails.

The purpose of the Malabar fleets was not only to harass the armadas but also to ensure the protection of the secret dispatch of pepper and the supply of rice from Bhatkal and Mangalore. This supply was assured with the help of the Mappilla of Eli. Maritime war off Kerala was to prove instrumental to the rise of the Islamic leaders of Cannanore. Paying no attention to the successive period of war and peace between Portugal and Calicut, they continually increased their prestige through the pursuit of conflict.

After the Portuguese had left Calicut, the merchants of the town resumed the trade in spices with Gujarat. The spices of Malabar were carried to Gujarati ports through the Maldives as well. A Venetian annalist could write in 1530, that all the spices sold in Egypt and Syria had been purchased in Diu by Arab and Turkish traders.[14]

The Portuguese had armed special fleets for the blockade of Malabar, but the situation became so bad that governor Nuno da Cunha himself took over the command of operations. He succeeded in negotiating with the Zamorin, who gave permission to build a fortress on the Chaliyam site in 1531.

The Kunjali rallied round Sultan Bahadur of Gujarat. Owing to the collaboration of the Ali Rajas and of certain Canarese ports, the maritime front extended from the Maldive archipelago to Diu. Meanwhile, since they had conquered the Mamluks' Egypt in 1517, Turkish fleets had appeared in the Indian Ocean. Their presence reawakened hopes and delusions that the *Rumes*' fleet had formerly aroused. Sultan Bahadur conceded to them bases in Diu and Surat, so that Malabar traffic became more secure. As the Mughals were threatening his kingdom Bahadur sought an alliance with the Portuguese to whom he conceded Bassein and then Diu in 1534-35. This reversal drove the Turks out of the ports of India for a while, and it hindered the Malabar spice trade just when it was becoming prosperous.[15] However, hidden under packages of cloth, the spices of Kerala kept arriving at the ports of the Cambay area, thanks to the perseverance of the Malabar seamen, as well as a certain tolerance among the Portuguese. Since the spice trade was linked to the textile trade, the Portuguese could not damage Gujarati business without harming their own commerce.

The possession of Diu and Chaliyam gave them only a precarious advantage, as the Malabars did not disarm. Although the Turks had failed to retake Diu (1538-39), some members of their crew joined the Mappilla forces. Despite political agreement, they used to patrol the coast as far as Coromandel and Sri Lanka from where they attempted to control the Bay of Bengal, ransacking all ships which came into the area. The dynastic wars of Sri Lanka and the murder of Pocaralle Ali Raja by Belchior de Sousa in 1545 provided the pretext for frequent naval engagements.

The internal conflicts in Kerala were another subject of discord. In 1550, the raja of Vadakkumkur reversed his traditional alliances in favour of the Zamorin, threatening at one and the same time, the king of Cochin and Portuguese interests. This was the beginning of a murderous war, during which the Perumpadappunad was invaded by the Zamorin's army, and the coastal cities bombarded by the Portuguese. In spite of the peace sworn on the beach of Calicut in 1556, the pepper wars continued for some time within the lagoon area.

Thus, the Mappilla response to the Portuguese expansion was initiated as early as 1507 by the Muslims of the Eli kingdom, led by their chief Mamale. They discovered in the Maldive archipelago, the possibilities of a direct route from the East Indies to the Red Sea. Later, they joined the Mappilla families from Calicut who armed a military fleet in command of the Kunjalis, in order to protect the pepper convoys which had to pass through to the Gujarati ports.

As they did not always have the help of the kings and lords to whom they were subordinate, they tended to follow an independent policy. This development was not only motivated by the necessity to expel the Portuguese from the spice trade but also by the desire of the Muslim communities to conduct their own affairs. This trend would grow as major changes affected the economic balance of peninsular India. The Mappilla reaction was a desperate attempt to give the Muslims of Kerala the command of the Ocean.

The Turning Point (1565-1580)

Meanwhile, important events were taking place in the Indian subcontinent. The sultans of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Bidar and Golconda had reunited for the purpose of destroying the Hindu empire of Vijayanagar. The Raya of Vijayanagar was killed after being defeated at the battle of Talikota in 1565. The army was wiped out and the city was razed to the ground. This had a serious effect on the economic life of the region. To the south of Goa, all the ports of the west coast lived off the trade from Vijayanagar.

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[14] Sanuto, *Diarii*, vol. 54, p. 599.

[15] In 1523, 42 ships from Malabar were calling in Diu before sailing for the Red Sea; in 1525, 100 *paraos* of pepper left Calicut for Gujarat; in 1532, Six *sambuks* of spices left Diu for the Red Sea; in 1526, three ships from Mecca were calling at Diu to purchase spices from Malabar; the same year, 150 Malabar *paraos* took their cargo in Barkur (Vijayanagar) for the Red Sea (from Godinho, *Economie*, p. 759).

The traders lost a significant market, which included horses and the majority of the Middle Eastern and European imports.

At that time, the conquests of the Mughal emperor Akbar were stretching as far as Deccan, causing the collapse of the kingdoms which had hitherto controlled it. The fall of Vijayanagar shortly preceded that of Gujarat (1562-73). Between them Gujarat and Vijayanagar had given the Indian peninsula a balance which, until their downfall, had lasted nearly three centuries. In 1588, the effects of their collapse were still being felt to such a degree that Filippo Sassetti wrote that the Portuguese trade was the liveliest along the coast.[16]

It appears, in fact, that initially the Portuguese took advantage of the confusion to consolidate their position in the ports of Karnataka—Honavar, Barkur and Mangalore—from where they exported pepper and rice. The Mughal control had not jeopardized their strongholds of Gujarat. The Gujarati merchants tried to save their overseas markets and accepted the escort of the Portuguese *cafilas*. Diu served as the relay for the traffic set up between Gujarat and the Red Sea ports. Goa experienced a renewed prosperity due to the Gujarati trade which was almost as important in volume as that of the Crown. For a time, the Portuguese thus compensated the failure of the horse trade, the profits from which had dropped to one twentieth of their original level following the fall of Vijayanagar.

The Luso-Indian trade was then far more important than the trade of the Crown. Pepper represented only six to seven per cent of *Estado da India's* commercial activity. The Kerala wars had compromised its harvest and transportation. The kaimals, who controlled the pepper areas, had been disappointed by the decision of Martim Afonso de Sousa to deprive them of the revenue which had been granted to them by the Crown. It is therefore likely that the best of the harvest escaped the Portuguese and was secretly exported under the supervision of the Mappilla shipowners. But even the latter could not compete with the Acheh pepper—the *pepe gauro* so much appreciated in Alexandria and Venice—which the Arab merchants went directly to Sumatra to collect.

Each year in September the ships of the *Carreira da India* arrived in Goa from where they sailed to Cochin, to load small quantities of pepper while waiting for the Moluccan ships, which brought them spices and products from Malacca. They then returned to Goa, where their cargo was completed with products from Gujarat, and pepper from Karnataka, far superior in quality to the Malabar pepper. This preference aroused a feeling of disappointment among the merchants from Cochin who carried on their association with the trade of the Portuguese Crown.

Changes were also taking place in Europe at this time. In 1580, Philip II annexed Portugal to Spain. This alienation caused long-term resentment on the shores of India. In the short-term, the *Estado da India* benefited from a rush of silver reals which attracted to Goa Moluccan spices, Gujarati indigo and cloth, Deccan diamonds and rubies from Pegu. At the beginning of the 1580's Goa inherited—to the detriment of Calicut—a part of Cambay's heritage. This prosperity was short-lived, since ambushes by Malabar seamen and attacks from Muscat pirates were on the increase. Though the Turks had failed to conquer positions in the Indian Ocean, their periodic incursions kept the armada on perpetual alert. Two squadrons of approximately thirty ships protected the maritime trade, one to the north and the other to the south of Goa. Goa was sometimes guarded only by three galleys.

The victories of the Islamic princes in Deccan raised the hopes of the Kerala Muslims and the possibility that they would replace the Gujarati thalassocracy. The defence of their interests was exalted to the level of a holy war. It was in this spirit that Zainuddin's chronicle, written in 1579, recorded the principal episodes in the Malabar war. For their part, the Lusitanian chroniclers treated any operation conducted against the Portuguese an an act of piracy. Neither side took any notice of the arbitration of the rajas, the keepers of the law In maritime matters the latter were powerless in their effort to control either peace or war. Although they generally accepted the services of the Muslim seamen, they feared their influence each time excessive ambition was demonstrated by any of them. By disputing the control of the Indian Ocean with the Portuguese, the Muslim chiefs found the opportunity to carry out their own policy and to free themselves from the tutelage of the Hindu kings. The attempts at independence which are evident at the end of the century are significant in this regard.

The Fight for the Sea: Kunjalis and Ali Rajas

Just before the fall of Vijayanagar, wars broke out along the coast of Eli in north Malabar. Following a brawl in the Cannanore bazaar, Ali Raja besieged the Portuguese fortress in 1564. Commanded by his cousin, Kutti Musa, and reinforced by Turkish crews, his fleet harassed Luis de Melo da Silva's squadron. In the Maldives, he managed to drive out the Christian king, installed there by the Portuguese, and take control of the archipelago. These successes encouraged Ali Raja to form a coalition which for a time grouped together all the Islamic powers of Deccan: Adil Shah of Bijapur marched on Goa, Nizam Shah of Ahmadnagar beseiged the Portuguese fort of Chaul. Both eventually deserted, and the Zamorin of Calicut was left to take action alone. He attacked the fortress of Chaliyam which, after a desperate struggle, was razed to the ground in 1571.

The Malabar seamen maintained a tight control over the area from

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[16] Sassetti, *Lettere*, 2, p. 352.

Gujarat to Sri Lanka. This led to frequent outbreaks of fighting, as the violent reactions of the Portuguese forced the rajas to take up arms, assisted by the Muslim seamen.

For this entire period, the chronicles only take account of the pillages, reprisals and ransoms. The Portuguese had built indigenous ships, light enough to pursue the *paraos* along the winding coast. Guided by their spies, generally recruited among the converted Malabars, they had adopted the technique of local warfare: before dawn they would attack suspect ports, burn anchored ships, pillage the warehouses and cut down the coconut palm trees. They had already seized the rice-ports and now, their most decisive action was blocking the rivers. The starving Hindu population however, did not turn against the Muslim, as the Portuguese had vainly hoped they would, but they did put pressure on the Zamorin who requested a peace in 1583.

This was the opportunity for the king of Calicut to distance himself from the Mappilla leaders who began to exert authority in conflict with his own. Some years earlier, while still at war, the Zamorin had replied to the complaints regarding their ravages by saying that he hoped to see these 'thieving ants' taken and burnt. The example of the king of Eli, discarded by Ali Raja, encouraged him to draw closer to the Portuguese who, although responsible for the decline of his kingdom, had never contested his sovereignty. However, this sovereignty was ridiculed by Pate Kunjali Marakkar, the most vigilant of his captains, who for more than thirty years made a name for himself against the armadas.

The origins of Pate Kunjali are obscure, although tradition has it that he was related to Muhammed Kunjali Marakkar who went from Cochin to Ponnani, and from there to the service of Calicut. We know that Ali Raja was his first protector. Maritime war had rendered Kunjali rich through acts of piracy. Each year he sent his own fleet to the Red Sea. Breaking the tradition of coastal privateering, he had extended his maritime domain from the Cape of Good Hope to the China Sea.

Pate Kunjali assumed the title 'King of the Malabar Muslims, Lord of the Indian Seas' and made no attempt to conceal his intentions. The Zamorin employed no capital in privateering but earned duty on the imports in his ports and also received presents. To show his contempt for the sovereign, Kunjali had one of the Zamorin's elephant's ears cut off and one of his Nayars castrated. After the Zamorin had granted the Portuguese a fortress at Ponnani, Kunjali claimed the mouth of the Kotte, a little downstream from Patupattanam. The two river banks bristled with fences which were bordered with redoubts. Beyond the two forts which defended the banks the *fustes* would ground in the shallow waters surrounding the citadel, which only the *almadias* could manage to sail. Situated at the mouth of the estauary, the citadel was built in the Portuguese style, in a square with four towers. A fleet of 22 *galiotes* protected the access to the stronghold. From this base, Pate Kunjali and his nephew Muhammad organized raids for the purpose of taking the treasures of the neighbouring lords.

The Zamorin was reluctant to tolerate the inevitable pillages of naval war. Consequently, in 1596, he decided to force Kunjali into submission, and to ally with the Portuguese forces, with the support of certain kaimals. Hunted on land by the Nayars, and at sea by the fleet of Andre Furtado de Mendoca, Kunjali placed his treasure in the safekeeping of Ali Raja.

After the death of Pate Kunjali, his nephew and heir entrenched himself in the Kotte citadel with his wives and the principal Mappilla leaders—Kanatal, Chinnali, Kutti Ahmad and Kutti Musa. After four months of siege, starvation forced them to surrender. Kunjali surrendered his arms to the Zamorin but the latter handed him over to Andre Furtado de Mendoca according to the terms of the agreement previously concluded. The Kotte citadel was sacked and razed by the Nayars, while Kunjali and his companions were taken to Goa in chains. They were tried for piracy and rebellion against the royal authority. Kunjali and Chinnali were condemned to be beheaded; the latter requested to be baptized and took the name, Bartolomeu. Thus the Mappillas were vanquished by the combined forces of the Portuguese fleet and the royal army of Calicut, thereby bringing to an end the final attempt to keep transoceanic trade in the hands of Indian seamen.

Meanwhile, Ali Raja had succeeded in making himself master of Cannanore. The Portuguese fortress was tolerated, but the Kolathiri of Eli had been dispossessed of the coastal region and now only reigned over the interior lands.[17] The rise of the Ali Rajas throws light on the role, hitherto misunderstood, of the Cannanore Muslims who, upon the arrival of the Portuguese, had set about hindering their expansion in the shadow of their own fortress. Until the end of the century, they tirelessly organized secret trading, armed fleets and plotted coalitions. Through their strength and initiative, they constantly overrode the authority of the legitimate sovereign and finally succeeded in founding the only Muslim dynasty to have reigned in Kerala.

Neither the Ali Rajas nor the Portuguese were able to control the maritime region formerly penetrated by the Gujaratis. The Portuguese were exhausted by the naval war conducted against both the Malabars and the Turks, as well as the pirates of Muscat and the Malay world. Besides, they had to cope with profound social changes, brought about by the encounter of other men, with their beliefs and customs, and by the development of mixed marriages and slavery. The constraints of the Inquisition and the trauma of the 1580 defeat caused disenchantment. More than ever before, the lack of men forced them to concentrate their forces on Goa; more than ever before, private interests clashed with those of the Crown; more and more, able-bodied men were turning away from the *Estado da India* to follow the road to the New World. Consequently, they established more peaceful relations with the Indian rulers and traders. *Cartaz* were widely distributed, and the Kerala ports were allowed, to a certain extent, to ship pepper to the Red Sea.

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[17] Pyrard de Laval, 1, pp. 725-726.

The Acheh traders had profited from the eclipse of Malabar. By increasing the production of pepper and exporting the spices of Indonesia and Sri Lanka in larger quantities, using the Maldives route, they were instrumental in restoring the former prosperity of the Red Sea.

The development of a network of roads in the Indian peninsula initiated by emperor Akbar gave a new impetus to commercial activity, bringing renewed life to the inland towns. From 1580, caravans of between two and three thousand oxen, laden with pepper, made their way from Cochin to central Asia, Bengal and Pegu. A Florentine merchant wrote in Cochin, in 1588: 'With his Court and military camps, the Great Moghul consumes everything, more than Vijayanagar did. His trade is as important as was that of Cambay, with the difference that it is not conducted by sea, but by land'.[18] This irreversible development led to undermining of the maritime interests of Kerala. Meanwhile, others were to make the most of this new state of affairs. On the Indian Ocean, English and Dutch seamen were getting to know the routes of the future.

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[18] Sassetti, *Lettere*, 2, p. 326.

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8

The Dutch East India Company in the Trade of the Indian Ocean

Om Prakash

Amongst the European corporate bodies engaged in trade in the Indian Ocean during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, the Dutch East India Company was the most important in terms of both the volume and value of trade handled as well as the number of ports where trade was carried on. The Company procured a variety of goods for Europe in the various ports of the region. But perhaps even more important was its large-scale participation in inter-port trade in the Indian Ocean littoral. In the process, a number of existing links were strengthened and possibly new links forged. In the present essay, we shall attempt a rationalization of the pattern and the extent of the Dutch Company's participation in the trade of the Indian Ocean during the seventeenth century. In the course of this exercise, it will occasionally be necessary to go beyond the confines of the Indian Ocean into the South China Sea and the Sea of Japan.

The Dutch East India Company was founded in 1602 by a charter granted by the States-General—the national administrative body of the Dutch Republic. During the last quarter of the sixteenth century and particularly since the closure, in 1585, of Seville and Lisbon to vessels from Holland, the Dutch had been actively engaged in trying to reach the Asian sources of spices and other luxury goods directly and contest the Portuguese monopoly of the Cape route. In April 1595, the Amsterdam-based 'Company of Far Lands', which was the first among the so-called 'pre-companies' and which had managed to raise a capital of £ 290,000, sent out four ships to the East Indies under the command of Cornelis de Houtman. One of the ships was lost but the remaining three came back in August 1597 with a cargo of pepper, nutmeg and mace. Another voyage was scheduled for the spring of the following year, notwithstanding the fact that the Company had suffered a net loss on the first voyage.

In the meantime, a number of new companies had been organized for trade with the East Indies. Two of these were in Amsterdam, two in Zeeland and another two in Rotterdam. The two Amsterdam companies were merged in 1598 and came to be known as the Old Company. It was on the account of this company that eight vessels were sent out to the East in the spring of 1598. The profit of the voyage was estimated at around 400 per cent. By 1600, yet another four companies had been formed in the various provinces of the Netherlands. The inevitable result was an increase in the cost price of pepper and other spices and a decline in their sale prices. To all those who realized the enormous potential of the East India trade, it was imperative that something was done to curb the cut-throat competition among the various companies.

The initiative was taken by the Old Company which, on the strength of being the pioneer in the East India trade and the most important participant in it since, petitioned the States of Holland in 1601, for a monopoly of all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope for a period of 25 years. The request was turned down but it was instrumental in setting in motion other moves to eliminate competition among the various companies. The States-General was interested in the various companies coming together not only because a financially strong United Company would be better equipped to conduct the East India trade more profitably, but also because it would be in a stronger position to face up to the combined opposition of the Portuguese and the Spaniards in the East Indies. Indeed, the East India Company could then be used as an instrument in the war against Spain and Portugal. It was mainly through the mediatory efforts of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt that the various units agreed to come together and the United East India Company was chartered on 20 March 1602. The Company was given the sole right for a period of 21 years to sail east of the Cape of Good Hope and west through the Strait of Magellan.

It is important to realize that the Euro-Asian trade during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries was characterized by a chronically and significantly unfavourable balance of trade for Europe. This necessitated the movement of large quantities of precious metals to Asia to settle the accounts. Thus, of the total value of the cargo sent out by the Dutch Company to the East Indies in 1615, goods accounted for only six per cent, the remainder being in the form of precious metals. Even in the mid-seventeenth century, when significant amounts of precious metals were already being obtained within Asia, the proportion of bullion in the total export bill to the East Indies continued to be larger than that of goods.

The crucial role of bullion in the Euro-Asian trade of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century has been ascribed to the rigidity of consumer tastes in the East, which rendered the Asian markets for European goods extremely small and static. Alternatively, it has been suggested that the absorption of precious metals by India or China reflected the hoarding habits in these societies. But perhaps the most convincing explanation of

this rather unusual phenomenon is the inability of Europe to supply western products at prices that would generate a large enough demand for them to provide the necessary revenue for the purchase of the Asian goods. Europe at this time had an undoubted overall superiority over Asia in the field of scientific and technological knowledge, but as yet not the distinct cost advantage that came with the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century. This put the Indian producers, with their considerably lower labour costs and a much longer history of sophisticated skills in handicrafts of various kinds, in a position of considerable advantage over their European counterparts in the production of a variety of manufactured goods. This is reflected in a fairly wide disparity in the price level in the two continents, commented upon by several Europeans in the eighteenth century. The only major item that Europe was in a position to provide Asia was precious metals.

Since Europe imported a large quantity of silver from the New World during the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century, it possessed the stock of precious metals necessary for a steady growth of the trade with Asia. And within Europe, Holland was in a particularly happy position in this regard. It is remarkable that notwithstanding the fact that from 1585 onwards, the Dutch were not permitted to trade in the Spanish ports and, in any case, there was a general prohibition on the export of precious metals from Spain, a substantial proportion of the South American silver coming to Spain did eventually find its way to Amsterdam, mainly via Hamburg. This made the Dutch the undoubted masters of the European bullion trade and Amsterdam the leading world centre of the trade in precious metals.

The Dutch realized from the very beginning that if the spice trade[1] was to continue to be highly profitable, they must strive to gain a determining control on both the total amount reaching Europe and the cost price in the Indies. The 1602 merger of the pre-companies into the United Company was only the first step in this direction. The ultimate aim was to eliminate the rivals in this trade—the Portuguese, the English and the Asian merchants. Between 1605 and 1609, the Company managed to wrest from the authorities in Amboina and Ternate agreements obliging the natives to supply their cloves exclusively to the Dutch. A similar agreement was concluded in 1605 with the Banda group of islands regarding the procurement of nutmeg and mace. The latter agreement was renewed after the conquest of the islands by the Company in 1621. The agreement with the English East India Company, in 1619, no doubt obliged the Dutch to permit the former to buy one-third of the total amount of spices available in the archipelago. But the accompanying obligation to bear one-third of the cost of Dutch garrisons in the area was found to be crippling and already in 1622, the English were planning to withdraw from the spice trade in view of the extreme shortage of resources and ships.

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[1] The region producing the spices was designated as the 'spice islands'. These were Amboina, off the southern coast of Ceram; the Banda group in the Banda Sea, south of Ceram; Ternate and Tidore, much farther north, off the coast of the large island of Halmahera. Amboina was the chief source of cloves; the others were the chief sources of nutmeg and its derivative, mace. The Dutch Company's policy was to confine the production of cloves, nutmeg and mace to Amboina and the Banda group where local authority was weakest. Pepper, another major spice, was grown over a much wider area in the archipelago.

By the early 1620's then, the Dutch had acquired effective monopsony rights in nutmeg and mace. The case of cloves was somewhat more complex. There was large-scale smuggling carried on between the producing areas and Macassar enabling the English, among others, to obtain large quantities of this spice. Though from 1643 onwards, the Company had managed to partly control such smuggling, it was only after the conquest of Macassar, in 1667, that the Dutch fully controlled the trade in cloves. As for pepper—which was a substantially more important item of investment in the Indies than all the other spices put together,[2] notwithstanding the availability of formal monopsony rights in a number of states in the region,[3] the Company never really acquired effective monopsony rights in this item.[4] It is, of course, true that the availability of pepper was more abundant and the cost price probably lower for the Dutch than it was for the English East India Company. It should also be remembered that the Dutch Company had to incur substantial costs in maintaining the forts and the garrisons necessary for the enforcement of its

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[2] In the mid-seventeenth century, pepper accounted for 50 per cent of total Dutch investment in the East as against a mere 18 per cent for the other spices. Even at the end of the century, the investment in pepper nearly equalled that in other spices. K. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade, 1620-1740* (Copenhagen/The Hague, 1958), p. 13, Table 1.

[3] For example, the ruler of Palembang conferred monopsony rights in pepper of the Company in 1642 and renewed them in 1662. The Achinese dominions of Tiku, Priaman and Indrapura in western Sumatra did so in 1649. The ruler of Indragiri signed a similar agreement in October 1664. The Company had to wait until August 1681, before it succeeded in wresting monopsonistic rights in this item from the ruler of Jambi, one of the major pepper-growing districts of Sumatra. The July 1643 agreement with Jambi had conferred exclusive buying rights in pepper jointly on the Dutch and the English, providing to the latter legal access to a major source of this spice. The English continued trading at Jambi until 1679 when factory was destroyed in a Malay attack. J.E. Heeres (ed.), *Corpus-Diplomaticum Neerlands Indicum* (The Hague, 1907-1954), 1, pp. 380-386, 407-412, 528-531; 2, pp. 209-212, 280-285, 285-287, 291-297.

[4] The English factors at Benkulen—the only English establishment in the archipelago after they had been driven out of Bantam in 1682—managed to procure substantial quantities of pepper, most of which had been smuggled in by native traders from Jambi and Palembang, in 1736, the Directors of the Dutch Company recorded that the English were importing as much pepper into Europe annually as was brought into Batavia from all the Dutch-controlled pepper districts in the archipelago: K. Glamann, *Dutch-Asiatic Trade*, pp. 89-90

privileges in the matter of buying spices. It is, therefore, important that the limitations of the term 'spice monopoly/monopsony' used here are not overlooked.

The control exercised by the Company on the spice islands enabled it to procure the spices at unusually low prices.[5] This ensured a very high rate of gross profit, often exceeding 1000 per cent. Before the advent of the Dutch on the scene, the spice growers were used to exchanging their wares against Indian clothes, rice and other necessities brought to them by the Indian and other Asian merchants as well as the Portuguese. The Company could have obtained Indian textiles—by far the most important medium of exchange in the spice islands—at Acheh and other places in the archipelago, but its acute business instinct drove it to their source, the Coromandel coast where a factory was established at Petapuli, in 1606, and Gujarat, where regular trade was started around 1618 at the port of Surat. Thus began the Company's participation in the trade of the Indian Ocean which in course of time assumed important proportions and became an object of as much concern as the trade with Europe itself. The involvement of the Company in the Indian Ocean trade was facilitated by the spice monopsony available to it. Spices were in demand all over Asia and provided the Company with an important source of purchasing power in areas where it sought trade, particularly because given its monopoly power, the Company was able to keep the selling prices at a fairly high level.[6] Indeed, according to Meilink-Roelofsz, the 'sales of spices formed the basis of Company expansion in other spheres of trade in Asia and were usually decisive when it was a question of continuing with a certain line of business or dropping it'.[7]

The high profitability and the crucial role of the Indian Ocean trade was evident to the Company soon after it first became involved in this trade. Thus already in 1612, Hendrik Brouwer, a future Governor-General of the East Indies, described the Coromandel coast as the 'left arm of the Moluccas and the surrounding islands because without textiles that come from there (the Coromandel coast), the trade in the Moluccas will be dead'. In a letter to Batavia in 1648, the Directors wrote, 'The country trade and the profit from it are the soul of the Company which must be looked after carefully because if the soul decays, the entire body would be destroyed.' Three years later, they even expressed the hope that at some point in time, it would be possible for Batavia not only to finance the exports to Europe (which in 1650-51 amounted to £ 2.7 million) wholly out of the profits from the trade within Asia but also to send to them in addition some Asian precious metals. While such extravagant hopes were never realized, the fact remains that throughout the seventeenth century, participation in the Indian Ocean trade was extremely advantageous to the Company.

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[5] Ordinarily, the purchase price was specified in the contracts themselves and was invirably kept at a very low level. Even when this was not the case, the price paid was lower than during the Portuguese period. Thus, in Ceram, the price paid for cloves was 50 to 60 rials per *bahar*, while earlier, the price used to be between 70 to 80 rials per *bahar*, M.A.P.Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade, and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (The Hague, 1962), p.214

[6] To take only one example, the gross profit on spices sold in Bengal in 1667 was : Cloves—710%, broken nutmeg—1,443% and mace—903% (letter from the Dutch factors at Hooghly to the directors dated 5.9.1667, K.A. 1156, f. 871).

[7] M.A.P.Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade*, p. 227.

The Indian Ocean trade was coordinated from Batavia, the eastern headquarters of the Company. Depending upon geographical proximity, a shipment from the point of origin to that of destination was either made directly or via Batavia. Given the limited tonnage at the disposal of the Company, efforts were also made to attract the traditional Chinese junk trade to Batavia where their trading activities could be properly supervised. The Chinese junks brought in commodities such as sugar, porcelain and coarse textiles which were in great demand in the region. They also provided an important market for pepper and other goods. Moreover, together with goods, the junks also brought in a large number of settlers on a regular basis. This fitted in very well with the Company's plans of colonization in the area. Also, the junk trade calling at Batavia enhanced the Company's revenue income from the customs duties levied there. The Company was, therefore, extremely anxious to promote the junk trade and incentives such as an exemption from duties to the first junk arriving in the season were freely offered. In fact, it has been argued that over a long period of time, the prosperity of Batavia came to be intimately linked with the ups and downs in the volume of the Chinese junk trade with this town.[8]

In 1619, Coen sent to the Directors a blueprint of the Company's Asian trade: clothes from Gujarat (obtained against spices, other goods and reals) to be exchanged against pepper and gold on the coast of Sumatra; clothes from Coromandel (obtained against spices, Chinese goods and Chinese gold and rials) to be exchanged against pepper at Batnam; sandalwood, pepper and rials to be exchanged against Chinese gold and Chinese goods, the latter being used also to get in exchange silver from Japan. Finally, rials of eight could be obtained at Arabia against spices and other sundry items. Since the Company already had spices available to it, all that was needed to turn this blueprint into reality was an adequate number of ships and enough capital for some time to establish the intra-Asian trade—'a little water to prime the pump'. The Company already had a permanently circulating capital of between £ 2.5 and £ 3.5 million in the East Indies at this time but Coen wanted more.

The directors, however, would not have found it easy to meet Coen's demands. Though there were no serious problems with regard to the export of precious metals from Holland, there was limit to the capital that the directors were in a position to send to the East Indies. While the total share capital of the Company was less than £ 6.5 million, its total debts in 1623 stood at £ 8 million. It is significant that while merchants of good standing could obtain credit in Amsterdam at between 3 and 4½ per cent per annum, the Dutch East India Company in its early years had to pay as much as 6¼ per cent. Resources for the development of Indian Ocean trade, therefore, had to be found partly within Asia.

In addition to pepper and other spices, the key commodity in Coen's blueprint was Indian textiles which had to be paid for in Coromandel mainly in gold and in Surat mainly in silver. It was, therefore, imperative to establish trade relations with Asian sources of precious metals. It would be immaterial whether these sources were themselves producers of these metals or obtained them through trade. Such places were China and, to a smaller extent, the west coast of Sumatra for gold, and Japan and Arabia for silver. The small quantity of gold available at Sumatra was of local produce and the Company was already entrenched there. Arabia received its supply of silver mainly from Europe via the Levant. As early as 1616, attempts were made to establish trade relations with Mocha. Among other goods, Indonesian spices were sent there even at the risk of these being smuggled into Europe via the Levant, compromising the Company's European monopoly. But the Company withdrew from Mocha in 1624, following problems arising out of the seizure of two ships belonging to the port of Dabhol on the west coast of India. The other major Asian sources of precious metals (besides the Philippines which obtained South American silver from Acapulco but which was under the control of the Spaniards and, therefore, out of the Company's reach) were Japan and China.

A factory was established at Hirado in southwest Japan in 1609. Over the following three decades, a number of developments took place in the organization of the foreign trade of Japan. When Japan's 'era of seclusion' began in 1639, the Dutch were the only Europeans to be permitted to continue trading in the country. While items such as fine quality cotton textiles, spices, sugar, lead, quicksilver and musk could be sold in Japan, the principal items in demand there during the early period of Dutch trade were Chinese silk, silk textiles and other Chinese goods.

The Dutch initially tried to obtain Chinese wares from ports in the South China Sea and the Malay peninsula in addition to Batavia, where Chinese junks came in large numbers for trade. The establishment of trade relations with Patani in Siam, and later with Cambodia, Annam and Tonkin was partly in the quest of Chinese goods. But the degree of success achieved in this regard was rather limited and attempts were made almost from the very beginning of the establishment of trading relations with Japan to have a trading post, by force if necessary, on the coast of China or

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[8] Leonard Blusse, 'Chinese Trade to Batavia during the days of the VOC,' *Archipel*, 18 (1979), pp. 195-213.

its immediate vicinity. The efforts to blockade Chinese trade with Manila were followed by an attack on Macao in 1622 and the subsequent occupation of the Pescadores. But soon thereafter, in 1624, the Dutch were persuaded to move to Taiwan in return for an informal agreement that the Chinese merchants would be allowed to go there to trade with them. The importance that the Company attached to the potential trade with China at this time is evident from the fact that large stocks of ready money were kept unutilized at Batavia 'for the China trade', while important factories such as the ones on the Coromandel coast faced acute shortage of funds.

The principal commodities procured by the Company in Taiwan were, of course, Chinese silk and silk textiles for the Japanese market. A part of the silver obtained from Japan was then invested not only in getting the next round of silk in Taiwan but also gold. As indicated earlier, the yellow metal was needed for the crucial Coromandel trade. Until its capture in 1662, by the forces of Cheng Cheng-kung ('Coxinga' of the European accounts), Taiwan remained an important source of gold for the Company. All through this period, the Company obtained gold in Taiwan in exchange for Japanese silver, rather than procuring it directly in Japan. This was because until 1637, given the different gold-silver parity in the two countries, it was more profitable to buy gold in Taiwan. And from 1641 onwards, at any rate, the export of gold from Japan was banned.

The Company obtained trading rights in Persia in 1623. Initially, the most important item procured there was raw silk. From the middle of the seventeenth century, however, the Company engaged in a thriving smuggling trade in Persian silver coins called abbasies and in 'Moorish' ducats. In Sri Lanka — the source of cinnamon — the Company obtained important commercial privileges in return for a promise of armed assistance against the Portuguese. The Company's quest for pepper took it to Malabar. The first contacts were made as early as 1604, though a regular factory was not established there until 1647.

Thus in the first few decades of its existence, the Dutch East India Company had succeeded in carving out a significant role for itself in both the intra-Asian and the Euro-Asian trade. Its intra-Asian trading network stretched from Arabia to Japan. At the risk of oversimplification, the most important links in this complex multilateral pattern of trade in the early 1630's might be summarized as follows. The European precious metals, the Japanese silver obtained mainly against Chinese silk and other goods, and the gold obtained at Taiwan mainly against Japanese silver and Indonesian pepper were invested primarily in Indian textiles. These textiles were exchanged largely for Indonesian pepper and other spices but also sent to Europe and various Asian factories. The bulk of the pepper and other spices was exported to Europe but a certain amount used for investment in various Asian factories such as those in India, Persia, Taiwan and Japan. Raw silk from Persia and China also found its way to Europe. Needless to emphasize, this multilateral pattern of trade involved the forging of new links amongst the various Asian markets and between the markets of Asia and Europe.

The foregoing survey of Dutch trade in Asia in the early part of the seventeenth century suggests that the two key factors that enabled the Dutch to achieve their enviable position were their near-monopsony privileges in spices, and more importantly, the trade with Japan in which they became the only Europeans to be allowed to participate after 1639. These two factors explain at least partly the marked edge that the Dutch East India Company had over its English rival in intra-Asian trade and to a smaller extent in the Euro-Asian trade through the greater part of the seventeenth century. By the same token, the decline in the crucial role of these two factors from around the last two decades of the seventeenth century partly explains the start of the decline in the Dutch intra-Asian trade and the increasing loss of ground in India to the English in the Euro-Asian trade.

The spice monopsony — notwithstanding the limitations it was subject to — entailed an extraordinarily high rate of return on spices sold in Europe. It also provided the Company a highly remunerative staple item of trade which considerably facilitated the expansion of its Indian Ocean trade. But with the steep decline in the relative significance of spices in the exports to Europe in the latter part of the seventeenth century, the positive effect of the spice monopoly on Euro-Asian trade was correspondingly reduced.

The pattern of the Dutch participation in intra-Asian trade was determined in part by the requirements of the trade with Japan which was by far the most important Asian source of precious metals for the Company during the seventeenth century. A large number of new gold and silver mines had been opened in Japan during the last half of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth century. As Glamann has pointed out, in certain years the precious metals procured in Japan were of greater value than those received at Batavia from Holland. But this profitable source of silver suddenly dried up in 1668 when the Japanese banned the export of this metal probably in response to a decline in domestic output. Fortunately for the Company, however, the ban on the export of gold imposed in 1641 had been withdrawn in 1664. This had served partially to absorb the shock following the loss of Taiwan in 1662. Following the ban on the export of silver in 1668, the Company exported increasing quantities of gold koban from Japan. The Dutch procurement of these coins continued to be large until 1696, when the gold content of the koban was reduced from 85.69 per cent to 56.41 per cent. While its silver price continued to be 6.8 taels. It is true that in the context of the non-availability of a major alternative Asian source of gold, the Company did continue procuring kobans in Japan until the middle of the eighteenth century. But the crucial role of the Japan trade in the framework of Dutch intra-Asian and Euro-Asian trade appears to have been compromised significantly after 1696.

In the decades after the initial establishment of the complex trading network in the Indian Ocean and elsewhere in Asia, the Company relentlessly followed its pursuit of exclusive privileges in the matter of the procurement and sale of goods. Thus in the Malay peninsula, by a treaty with the sultan of Kedah in June 1642, the Dutch obtained the right to buy annually half the total amount of tin available in the sultanate at a fixed price against cash or cotton textiles. Three years later, another treaty concluded with the ruler of Bangery conferred upon the Company monopsony rights in tin and monopoly rights in textiles throughout the kingdom. In 1650, the tin trade of Perak was divided equally between the Dutch and the subjects of Acheh. This treaty was reconfirmed in 1659. All these privileges were of course, qualified to a certain extent by the fairly substantial amount of trade that the Asian merchants managed to carry on with these parts inspite of Dutch efforts to the contrary.

While in a number of cases, the Company obtained exclusive rights in the sale of Indian textiles, an incidental to the privileges granted to it in the purchase of spices and non-precious metals, in others the privilege obtained consisted primarily in the monopoly in textiles and other goods sold by the Company in the region. Perhaps the most important example in the latter category was the 1677 agreement with the ruler of Mataram, in central Java, whereby the Dutch were granted the sole right to import Indian textiles and opium into the kingdom. A similar privilege was extracted from the king of Palembang in 1678 and from the ruler of Cheribon in January 1681.

Outside the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago, the most extensive trading privileges available to the Company in the Indian Ocean littoral were in the island of Sri Lanka. During the sixteenth century, the Portuguese had coerced a number of local princes into agreements conferring exclusive rights on the former. In 1612, the Dutch concluded an agreement with Senerat Wimala Dharma, the king of Kandy containing important commercial privileges in exchange for a vague promise of armed assistance against the Portuguese. In 1637, a Dutch fleet assisted the forces of Raja Sinha II, who had succeeded Senerat Wimala Dharma in 1629, in a successful attack on the Portuguese stronghold of Batticaloa. This prompted the king to enter into an agreement with the Company in May 1638, which gave monopoly rights to the Company in all the important commodities exported from Sri Lanka, the only exception being elephants. The Dutch in return promised assistance in men and materials in the event of a conflict with the Portuguese. The cost of the assistance was to be reimbursed in kind in the form of cinnamon, pepper and other local trade goods. The process of the expulsion of the Portuguese from the island started the very next year and was completed in 1658. From then, the

Dutch controlled the largest concentration of power in Sri Lanka. In fact, at one stage, Rijkloff van Goens the Senior, even visualized the possibility of making Sri Lanka, rather than Batavia, the base for Dutch power in the East.

The political supremacy of the Company brought in its wake enormous privileges in matters of procurement for trade. The most important item procured in the region was cinnamon and since this spice was grown, for all practical purposes, only in Sri Lanka, the Company assumed full monopoly rights in this item. Procurement of and trade in cinnamon had traditionally been a state preserve under the Sinhalese kings as well as the Portuguese. Nothing could be simpler than to inherit that privilege and, if possible, to enlarge upon it. Cinnamon trees were grown in the wild in the west and southwest of Sri Lanka and the only costs associated with the procurement of cinnamon were those of peeling the bark and its transportation. Each farmer belonging to the *chalia* (or *salagma*) caste was obligated, as before, to deliver to the new sovereign—the Company—a certain minimum amount of cinnamon per annum free of cost. A nominal payment was stipulated for deliveries in excess of the minimum obligatory amount. The transportation of the cinnamon to the ports was also the responsibility of the *chalia kulis*. The cost of cinnamon, therefore, was kept at an exceedingly low level. In fact, the growing trade of the Company in this item put strains on the *chalia* farmers to an extent unknown before. That, in turn, understandably generated a measure of discontent against Dutch rule.

In course of time, the Company extended its monopoly over elephants (which, like cinnamon, had traditionally been a state preserve) and areca nuts among export goods and cloth among import goods. It was, of course, impossible completely to eradicate smuggling by Asian merchants in these items. Needless to mention, the producers and the merchants dealing in these items got nothing like a reasonable return for their efforts. Indeed, given the exceedingly poor terms offered by the Company, Producers of items such as areca nuts often preferred to let their crop rot on the trees rather than invest time and effort in picking it up.[9]

On the mainland of India, the Company managed to get exclusive privileges only on the Malabar coast. As a producer of pepper, the region had an obvious attraction for the Company. After the Portuguese had been thrown out of Sri Lanka in 1658, the Dutch were free to direct their attention to the Portuguese menace on the Malabar coast. An important consideration was to eliminate the risk of the Portuguese trying to reconquer Sri Lanka from their base at Cochin. The Company was also approached by a rival faction of the royal house of Cochin—the Mutta

[9] S. Arasaratnam. 'The Dutch East India Company in Ceylon and Coromandel in the 17th and the 18th century' in M.A.P.Meilink-Roelofsz (ed.), *De VOC in Azie* (Bussum, 1976), pp. 14-63.

branch—for assistance in throwing out both the Portuguese and the faction in power, the Vettatu branch. Between 1658 and 1663, five Dutch expeditions were sent from Sri Lanka culminating in the conquest of Cochin in January 1663. The Mutta branch was put on the throne and the Dutch obtained special privileges on the lines of the Portuguese before them. They got the Cochin fort and also the fortification at Palipuram to the north of Cochin. People who had been converted to Christianity by the Portuguese were brought under the jurisdiction of the Company. But most important of all the Company got monopsony rights in pepper in the territory between Porakkad and Cranganore. Monopoly rights were also obtained in opium which was by far the most important medium of payment for the pepper procured in several parts of the region.

In its actual working, however, the Company's monopoly was qualified a great deal by the large scale smuggling in both opium and pepper. Given the very large amount of inland tracks used for the purpose, the Company realized that any attempt to police the tracks on its own would involve a disproportionately high cost. The next best solution was to try and control the finances of the raja of Cochin to ensure that adequate funds were indeed allocated for payment to guards employed by the state to check smuggling in pepper. But such a control was never achieved in an adequate measure because of the inability of the Company to successfully penetrate the complicated structure of power at the court of Cochin.[10]

The Company was unable to secure similar exclusive privileges in any other part of the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal government, the king of Golconda or even the nayaks of southern Coromandel were not subject to political coercion of the kind that the Company, for a variety of reasons, had found feasible in the Indonesian archipelago, Sri Lanka and the Malabar coast. This, of course, does not imply that the authorities in Mughal India and the Coromandel coast were not generally favourably inclined towards an expansion in the trade from their ports through whatever agency. As such, the Company was given a variety of concessions, the most important of which related to the customs and other duties. On the Coromandel coast, for example, the Company was obliged to pay a 4 per cent customs duty which in 1612 was commuted into an annual payment of 3,000 pagodas. It was also exempted from stamp duty on cloth amounting to about 12 per cent. In the early period of the Company's trade in the region, the procurement for the Indonesian archipelago always took precedence over that for Europe. An important item the Company procured in Coromandel during the early years were slaves for the nutmeg and mace plantations in Amboina and Banda. Indeed, Coen often insisted that the procurement of slaves be given the highest priority in Coromandel. In a letter written in 1622, he went so far as to declare that even hundreds of thousands of slaves would not be too many. The response of Coromandel to such exhortations was less than enthusiastic. The availability of slaves in the local market was partly a function of the state of the harvest: it was only in periods of scarcities and famines that slaves could be bought in large numbers at a reasonable price. In normal times, it would simply be impossible to engage in a large scale slave trade from Coromandel. At any rate, after Coen's death in 1629, very few slaves would seem to have been procured by the Company on the Coromandel coast.

The principal commodity that the Company procured on the Coromandel coast was textiles printed as well as painted. It has been suggested that from the mid-seventeenth century onwards, the average annual value of the Company's textile exports from the coast for Europe was of the order of 0.5 to 1 million guilders. The figure of exports for the Asian market has been estimated at twice this amount.[11]

The other major Indian source for textiles for the Indian Ocean market was Gujarat. The Council of the Indies instructed the factors at Surat time and again to first meet the textile orders from the archipelago before putting out contracts for indigo for Holland. The rationale provided was as follows. If funds were invested in indigo for Holland, the Company could expect to earn a gross profit of approximately 200 per cent. On the other hand, if the same funds were invested in textiles for the archipelago, where they were exchanged against pepper for Holland, the Company could eventually hope to earn a gross profit of 500 per cent on the initial investment in Gujarat.

The port of Surat had basically two hinterlands supplying goods to it as well as providing a market for its imports. One consisted of the cities of Ahmedabad, Broach, Cambay and Dholka which lay on the route that connected the port to the royal cities of Agra and Delhi. The other consisted of the far-off cities in the region which also sent their produce to Surat as well as looked to it for their requirements of spices and other import goods.

Indeed, the Company's factory at Surat was its largest sales outlet in Asia for Indonesian spices and Japanese copper. The result was that the Company's trade at Surat was much more a trade involving an exchange of goods for goods rather than one involving an exchange of bullion for goods as was the case in other parts of the Indian subcontinent such as the Coromandel coast and Bengal. In the second half of the seventeenth century, there were even years when the Surat factory was a net exporter of bullion in the form of Mughal silver rupees. In this role, the Surat factory was more akin to those in Japan and Persia than to others in India.

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[10] H.K. Jacob, 'The Dutch East India Company and the Malabar Coast in the 17th century' in M.A.P.Meilink-Roelofsz (ed.), *De VOC in Azie,* pp. 85-99.

[11] S. Arasaratnam 'The Dutch East India Company in Ceylon and Coromandel', in Meilink-Roelofsz, op.cit.

Surat was directed to send its surplus rupees to Bengal where the Company's trade was expanding rapidly at this time.

The Company had started trading in Bengal in the early 1630's. For the next half a century or so, the region played a major role in the overall framework of the Company's trade within Asia. Goods procured in Bengal figured in the cargo sent to a whole host of factories between Nagasaki at one end and Gombroon at the other. Bengal raw silk, for example, was the staple item sent to the crucially important Japanese market. It has been estimated that between 1656 and 1672, which was the peak period of the Dutch exports to Japan during the latter's 'closed-country' era, goods from Bengal accounted on an average 48 per cent of the total cargo sent to Nagasaki. Also, Bengal opium found an ever-growing market in the Indonesian archipelago. Indeed, Bengal soon became the sole supplier of this highly profitable drug which accounted for a good proportion of the Company's total sales turnover in the region.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the Company's involvement in the trade within the Indian Ocean and the contiguous areas had reached its peak. The subsequent decades witnessed the beginnings of a decline. This was partly because of the growing attention that was now paid to the trade with Europe. The composition of the exports to Europe was also undergoing a major alteration around this time with pepper and other spices increasingly losing ground to raw silk and textiles. In the new configuration, the Indian factories, particularly the ones in Bengal, became very important. In the early years of the eighteenth century, for example, Bengal alone provided nearly 40 per cent of the total Asian cargo sent to Holland. The net result was a substantive modification in the overall profile of the Company's trading strategy in the Indian Ocean and elsewhere in Asia.

The impressive presence of the Company in the trade within and from the Indian Ocean naturally opened up areas of conflict as well as co-operation with the indigenous mercantile groups. Wherever the Company's planned expansion into a new area threatened the interests of Asian merchants already operating there, the latter understandably tried to obstruct the Company's plans. An example would be the efforts the merchants of Surat made in the early part of the seventeenth century to frustrate the Company's efforts to enter the Red Sea trade based at Mocha. But such areas of conflict did not prevent the company and the Asian merchants from co-operating with each other in a variety of fields. An example would be the extensive hiring of freight space on each other's vessels as well as the chartering of whole vessels for particular voyages. Individual Dutch and Asian merchants also collaborated in financing voyages to and from various Indian Ocean ports. Occasionally, the Europeans also used the services of Asian merchants in the capacity of agents for equipping and despatching ships on their behalf.

Extensive participation in the Indian Ocean trade was probably the single most important factor that distinguished the Dutch East India Company from its principal rivals, namely the English and later the French East India Company. It is true that the Portuguese had preceded the Dutch in this, but the sophistication of operation and the volume of trade achieved by the Dutch was something quite new. For the first time in the history of the Indian Ocean trade, there was a single agency engaged in a large volume of inter-port trade on a multilateral basis under the centralized direction and control of Batavia. The Company was obviously the principal beneficiary of such participation in this trade, but it was also of some consequence to the overall structure of the Indian Ocean trade.

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9

East Africa and Indian Ocean Trade : 1500-1800

M. D. D. Newitt

Zeila, Socotra and the Gulf of Aden in 1500

The western side of the Indian Ocean is bordered by four thousand miles of African coastline. In the extreme north, the coasts of modern Somalia and Djibouti bordering the Gulf of Aden are largely desert supporting only a thin and scattered population. At a distance varying from twenty to a hundred miles inland lie the Ethiopian highlands. On the seaward side, the Gulf of Aden has been a busy highway for thousands of years, the Red Sea route to India having always been a strong rival to the route through Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf. The use of the Red Sea route depended on a knowledge of the Indian Ocean monsoons and these were already known as early as the first century AD when the seaman's guide to the Indian Ocean, the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*, was written.

Trade carried Mediterranean and Near Eastern influences down the Red Sea. Jewish, Roman and Greek Christian colonies were founded. Later Islam spread rapidly along both shores. Zeila, on the southern side of the Gulf of Aden, became the centre of an important Islamic state which periodically challenged Ethiopia for control of the coastal lowlands and which maintained a suzerainty over the Somali pastoralists as far inland as Harare. Its site on the coast indicated the importance of seaborne commerce, most of which, in 1500, was carried on by ships from Aden and Gujarat. Ludovico di Varthema described the commerce of Zeila in 1510:

> The before-named city of Zeila is a place of immense traffic especially in gold and elephants teeth. Here also are sold a very great number of slaves which are those people of Prester John [Ethiopia] whom the Moors take in battle, and from this place they are carried into Persia, Arabia Felix and to Mecca, Cairo and into India.[1]

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[1] Badger, G. P. (ed.), *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema*, Hakluyt Society (London, 1868), p.86 ; for Indian traders in Aden: R. B. Serjeant, *The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast* (Oxford, 1963), pp.32-34. There was also extensive Indian commerce with the Red

The trade in Ethiopian slaves, known in India as *habshi,* must have been considerable. They were employed as soldiers by a number of Indian rulers and by states in the Persian Gulf. Zeila and its sister port of Berbera also exported wax, honey and sesame oil and, perhaps more importantly, horses which another contemporary account says were traded south to Kilwa and Mombasa.

Events during the first half of the sixteenth century severely damaged the prosperity of this section of the coast. Portuguese fleets sacked Zeila in 1517 and Berbera in 1518, after which the kingdom of Zeila became involved in a long drawn out war with Ethiopia which ended in defeat and disaster in 1542. During this time the Portuguese blockade of the Red Sea stifled much of the commerce that had passed through the Gulf of Aden and drew active intervention from the Turks. Turks occupied Egypt in 1517 and began to place garrisons in the Red Sea ports, embarking on a twenty year naval struggle with the Portuguese.

At the mouth of the Gulf of Aden lies the island of Socotra, which in 1500 had a considerable population and a position in Indian Ocean trade of sufficient importance to encourage the Portuguese briefly to occupy and fortify it.[2] According to Duarte Barbosa, Socotra supplied

> 'much fine ambergris (also many stones called Niccoli, of the valuable kind, which are prized at Mecca) and conch shells of the kind that are valuable in the Mine [Gold Coast] and abundance of dragons blood and Socotra aloes, also plenty of sheep and cows.[3]

Socotra, like Aden, was a centre for the production of dyestuffs and had cowrie fisheries used by the Portuguese for the supply of their trading factory at Elmina. It also had a cloth industry—woollen cloths 'of great value, and a useful article for trade on the coast of Melynde and Mombaca where they are much used' (Barbosa, I, 63).

Mogadishu and the Banadir Coast

The Banadir coast is the region from the Horn of Africa southwards to the Lamu archipelago. It is largely a desert region but a number of seasonal rivers have created at their mouths promontories and sandspits which have provided the classic sites of maritime settlement. The three most important trading ports of this coast in 1500 were Mogadishu, Merka and Barawa. These towns had always had strong ties with the Persian Gulf and the Hadramaut, and Islamic settlers from those regions had been arriving since at least the tenth century. The towns were ruled by an oligarchy of merchant families (some of whom claimed to be Shirazi indicating their belief in their Persian origins) who shared the main political offices. They also dominated trade, for merchants visiting Mogadishu at the height of its influence in the fourteenth century had to lodge with one of the leading merchants and buy and sell through his good offices.

The Portuguese reported that Mogadishu had at one time controlled the gold trade from southern Africa, but in 1500 its influence seems to have been more confined to the north. Ivory, gum, honey, wax and other products of the Ogaden were brought to the coast for sale. Ivory from this region reached China at least as early as the ninth century. The Chinese also imported rhino horn, turtleshell, ambergris and live wild animals.[4] In the fifteenth century, Chinese ships actually visited this coast underlining the importance it possessed in international trade.

These commodities supplied the luxury markets of the east and most imports also fell into this category—fine cloths from India, Persian ceramics, porcelain and silver—though the Somali towns also imported rice. The more utilitarian items needed for the purchase of ivory from the peoples of the interior were, at least in part, supplied by local industries, for Mogadishu apparently had a cloth and bead industry of its own. Mogadishu was also important in the horse trade and was probably the most southerly point where horse breeding was possible.

In 1506, the Portuguese attacked Barawa, allegedly taking a rich booty of gold, silver, ivory and cloth, but they left Mogadishu alone. Nevertheless the sixteenth century saw disturbances far more serious than the coming of the Portuguese. The wars between Zeila and Ethiopia, and still more the migrations of the Galla, disturbed the Ogaden to such an extent that there was a great decline in trade and a migration of many of the mercantile families further south. It is possible that the Anteimoro of southern Madagascar may originally have been refugees from the Banadir coast in the early sixteenth century.

Sea and from Massawa Indian traders had penetrated the interior of Ethiopia. See Richard Pankhurst, 'The "Banyan" or Indian presence at Massawa, the Dahlak Islands and the Horn of Africa', in C. Mehaud (ed.), *Mouvements de Populations dans l'Ocean Indien* (Paris, 1979), pp.107-128. Cowries from the Maldives found their way to west Africa via Red Sea ports to which they were brought by Indian traders. Cowries were fished off the African coast, in Socotra and the Dahlak Islands but they do not appear to have been used widely as a currency except at Kilwa. See J. S. Hogendorn, 'A Supply-side Aspect of the African Slave Trade : the Cowrie Production of the Maldives', *Slavery and Abolition,* 2 (1981), pp.31-52.

[2] The population of Socotra were thought to have been Christians of the St. Thomas communion. If this were so, there would be a strong assumption that they were linked with the Malabar coast in southwestern India. See letter of St. Francis Xavier, Goa, 20 Sept. 1542, in G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, *The East African Coast* (Oxford, 1962), pp.135-7 ; also Serjeant, *The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast* appendix v.

[3] Dames, M.L. (ed.), *The Book of Duarte Barbosa* (London, 1918), p.63.

[4] For a recent discussion of the links with China see Neville Chittick, 'East African Trade with the Orient', in D. S. Richards (ed.), *Islam and the Trade of Asia* (Oxford, 1970). Chittick believes that there was no direct Chinese trade with east Africa but that goods passed through the hands of Arab or Persian intermediaries. Most of the Chinese porcelain found on the coast dates from the fourteenth or fifteenth century only. See J.S.Kirkman, 'The Coast of Kenya as a Factor in the Trade and Culture of the Indian Ocean', in M.Mollat (ed.), *Societes et Compagnies de Commerce en Orient et dans l'Ocean Indien* (Paris, 1970), p.248.

The Mrima Coast from Lamu to Kilwa

The coast, from Lamu south to Kilwa is the heartland of Swahili culture. The coast itself is reasonably well-watered and supports a typical Indian Ocean vegetation but it is backed by a belt of arid country that extends to the escarpment which is a formidable barrier for those wishing to pass to and from the interior. The sea is studded with offshore islands, mostly of coral, and the drift of the currents creates sandspits which become strips of land backed by lagoons. These islands and sandspits provide ready access from the sea, and proved ideal for defensive purposes.

A large number of mercantile towns existed along this coast in 1500. Some of them, like Melinde, Mombasa and Kilwa were major cities involved in international commerce. Others were of lesser importance, having their origins as offshoots from the larger towns and continuing to supply them with foodstuffs, raw materials and manufactures.

The rulers of Melinde and Mombasa claimed to be of Arab or Persian origin and were probably closely related to the rulers of the Somali coast. They were, however, comparative latecomers, for the Romans had traded with the Mrima coast and at one time there may have been extensive Indonesian settlement.[5] The towns themselves had originally been founded by the local populations and the Arab rulers had to maintain close and complex relations with the Bantu peoples of the mainland Alliances linked factions within the towns to individual Bantu clans, alliances which were cemented by marriages and which allowed the townsmen to spread their economic activity on the mainland, growing food on their *shambas* and trading in a wide variety of commodities. Not surprisingly there was frequent intervention by Bantu groups in the affairs of the coastal towns, yet the reverse appears not to have happened, for there was little penetration of Islamic influence inland before the nineteenth century.[6]

Ivory was the item of trade that chiefly attracted foreign merchants but the Portuguese did capture considerable quantities of copper when they sacked Mombasa in 1505. Slaves are not mentioned as an export. There was probably an important, if unspectacular, trade with the Hadramaut in mangrove poles. The major import was cloth from Gujarat but Indian beads were also of importance, and cloves, pepper, silver, ceramics and porcelain were also bought. In 1500, both Mombasa and Melinde traded directly with India. On his first voyage to India, Vasco da Gama was sufficiently ignorant to confuse Hindus with Christians and he found 'Christian' merchants at both cities.[7] Indian merchants apparently had to enter into a sort of partnership with the ruler in order to trade and in addition paid duties on goods brought in and out by sea.

The third mercantile centre of this coast was Kilwa. Although very much in decline by 1500, its economic power and its reputation were still great enough for the Portuguese to single it out as the key to the trade of southeast Africa. Kilwa had grown from humble beginnings through its participation in the gold trade of central Africa and its economic life was of some complexity. Gold was traded principally at Sofala, a port of the Mozambique coast which Kilwa controlled until late in the fifteenth century. The value of the gold trade enabled Kilwa to support a wider range of economic activity than her rivals to the north. Ships looted by the Portuguese off Kilwa in the early sixteenth century yielded ivory, gold, silver and pearls. Slaves were also captured but these were not for export and were used to supply the labour needs of Kilwa herself. *Shambas* on the mainland provided the city with some of its food; iron was smelted; cotton grown, spun and woven; perfume and perfume censers were produced and there was an important boat-building industry. Kilwa used cowrie currency and minted its own copper coinage. Her size and economic importance supported settlements to the north and south along the coast and these sent timber, food, coir, pitch and other commodities to the city. Many of them owed their foundation to members of Kilwa's ruling families. Through its colonies Kilwa had a surplus of food, some of which was exported to Aden.

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[5] The Indonesian cultural legacy is thought to include xylophones, outrigger canoes and the domestication of the banana: A. M. Jones, *Africa and Indonesia : the Evidence of the Xylophone and other Musical and Cultural Factors* (Leiden, 1964). For a recent discussion of the subject see R. Kent, 'The Possibilities of Indonesian Colonies in Africa with special reference to Madagascar', in C. Mehaud (ed.), *Mouvements de Populations dans l'Ocean Indien* (Paris, 1979), pp.93-105.

[6] Curtin, Feierman, Thompson and Vansina, *African History* (London, 1978), p.177. For the relations of Mombasa with the *miji kenda*, the nine tribes who acted as trading partners for the urban merchants see E. A. Alpers and C. Ehret, 'Eastern Africa' in R. Gray (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Africa*, 5 (Cambridge, 1975), p.531. A radical reinterpretation of the history of the coast and of the relations of the mainland peoples with the towns has recently been offered by J. de Vere Allen. He suggests that the towns were essentially part of the culture of the African mainland peoples not maritime colonies: J. de Vere Allen, 'Swahili Culture and the Nature of East Coast Settlement', *African Historical Studies* 14 (1981), pp.306-334.

[7] In Mombasa 'the Christian merchants in the town are only temporary residents and are held in much subjection, they not being allowed to do anything except by order of the Moorish king'. In Melinde there were four 'Christian' ships from India, and Vasco da Gama was told that they would provide him with a pilot. G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville, op. cit., pp.38-9, 45. Apart from close commercial relations with India it is believed that there may have been Indian settlement in east Africa prior to the thirteenth century, see N. Chittick, 'The Coast before the Arrival of the Portuguese' in B.A.Ogot (ed.), *Zamani* (Nairobi, 1974),p.105. Among the imports from India were engraved tomb stones. See Chittick in Kirkman, 'The Coast of Kenya as a Factor in the Trade and Culture of the Indian Ocean', op.cit., p.253. A discussion of east African relations with India is given in Neville Chittick, 'Indian Relations with East Africa before the Arrival of the Portuguese' in Section III of the *Proceedings of the ICIOS Conference*, Perth, Western Australia, 1979.

South of Kilwa

South of Kilwa the African coast continues to be fringed with coral islands, sandspits and lagoons. However, some of the major African rivers, like the Rovuma, Zambesi, Sabi and Limpopo, enter the sea on this coast creating deltas and coastal marshes. For part of their lower reaches these rivers are navigable and provide access to the interior, particularly the Zambesi which offers a passage to sizeable boats for three hundred miles inland. Much of the coast of Mozambique is well-watered, particularly around the Zambesi delta, though it tends to become arid once again south of the Sabi.

The Mozambique Channel lies within the monsoon system but is dangerous for navigation. It is regularly struck by cyclones and is strewn with reefs and small island, mostly on the eastern side. At the north end of the Channel lie the four Comoro Islands like stepping stones connecting Africa with Madagascar. These islands are extremely fertile, having a volcanic rather than coraline origin. They have provided a migration route for plants, animals and men and attracted agricultural settlement even before they became part of the commercial system of the Indian Ocean.[8]

Navigation south of Kilwa followed two routes, one through the Comoro Islands to the towns of northern Madagascar, the other south down the Mozambique coast to the gold fairs of Sofala and the pearl fisheries of Bazaruto. The Islamic trading towns in the Comoros and northern Madagascar were probably replacing older Indonesian settlements. By 1500, they had become economic satellites of Kilwa, producing rice, cattle, timber, carved stone jars and basins, and palm cloth, all of which found markets on the east African coast.[9] The Portuguese also refer to a trade in slaves between northern Madagascar and the Melinde coast.

South of Kilwa shipping first reached the Querimba Islands, some of which had links with Zanzibar rather than Kilwa and were centres of cloth weaving, using locally grown indigo to dye the material. The main focus of the southern trade route, however, was the port of Sofala occupying a lowlying, marshy site a hundred miles south of the Zambesi delta. Sofala was somewhat different from the other commercial centres of the coast. Instead of merely receiving gold brought from inland, it was a base for the commercial penetration of the interior. Merchants attended fairs held by the Shona chiefs along the escarpment some two hundred miles inland and some may have travelled as far as the famous stone-built city of Zimbabwe.

Why south of the Zambesi traders should have penetrated inland while elsewhere they remained closely confined to the coast is not clear. It may have been the result of the easy access to the interior provided by the east African rivers or it may have resulted from the desire of the Shona chiefs to control the trade, a control which would only be possible if traders attended fairs in the chief's territory. The system of trading through semi-permanent inland fairs was to persist in this part of Africa until the nineteenth century. Sofala was probably controlled politically as well as economically by Kilwa until a short time before the arrival of the Portuguese and it was of sufficient importance to have a number of small dependencies of its own. The most important of these were Chiluane and the Hucicas Islands (Bazaruto) where there were pearl fisheries.

By 1500, a number of trading towns existed on the coast north of Sofala. These had reputedly been founded by dissidents from Kilwa, reflecting the internal discord associated with Kilwa's decline in the late fifteenth century. Of these, Mozambique Island was a boat-building centre and exported ebony but it was Angoche, situated between Mozambique and Zambesi, which was expanding most rapidly, siphoning away central African gold from Sofala through trading posts established on the Zambesi itself.

South of Bazaruto the picture is obscure. The coast lies within the system of Antarctic winds making it inaccessible to seafarers dependent on seasonal winds. Muslims may have sailed as far as Inhambane for a cloth industry certainly existed there in the sixteenth century. Beyond Inhambane the existence of any seaborne commerce prior to the coming of the Portuguese is very doutbful.

The Economy of the East African Coast before 1500

The trade of east Africa with Arabia and India was dominated by the exchange of African gold and ivory for eastern luxury goods, primarily beads, ceramics and cloth. It has been suggested that even at this early stage Africa was exchanging raw materials for manufactured goods and that this was working to prevent her from developing her own manufacturing capacity. Underdevelopment, in other words, was already a fact by 1500.

A closer look at the east African coast reveals a much more varied economy for the role of international trade as a crucial determinant has probably been exaggerated. Cloth of various kinds was produced on all parts of the coast, woven from locally grown cotton and dyed with locally produced dyes. Boats were built and equipped with locally manufactured coir ropes, masts, sails and pitch. There was quarrying and lime burning;

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[8] Benson, C. W., 'The Birds of the Comoro Islands' *Ibis* 103b (1960), pp.55-106. There is no good general history of the Comoro Islands but see H. Chagnoux and A. Haribou, *Les Comores* (Paris, 1980) and M. Newitt, *The Comoro Islands : A Profile* (Bouldner, 1984), pp.144.

[9] Tibbetts, G. R.,*Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean before the coming of the Portuguese* (London, 1971); Pierre Verin, 'Aspects de la Civilisation des Echelles Anciennes du Nord de Madagascar' in C. Mehaud (ed.), *Mouvements de Populations dans l'Ocean Indian* op.cit. pp.61-90; M. Newitt, 'The Comoro Islands in Indian Ocean trade before the Nineteenth Century', *Cahiers des etudes Africaines,* 23 (1983).

stone carving and building; mat making and the production of perfume and perfume burners; iron was smelted and gold worked into wire and jewellery. Finally there was extensive food production for the market —cattle, millet, rice and sesame (with an attendant industry producing sesame oil). Horses were bred in the north and there are references to ginger produced in the Comoros and Madagascar. International trade, therefore, existed alongside a productive economy to which it had contributed through the introduction of eastern food plants and industrial techniques. It is true that much of this was confined to the coast but already in 1500 there were signs that this 'coastal' economy had begun to penetrate inland, notably south of the Zambesi, and that in time it would influence other parts of the interior.

The Portuguese in the Western Indian Ocean in the Sixteenth Century

The arrival of the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century did not immediately alter the nature of Indian Ocean trade. At first the Portuguese were concerned to establish a monopoly in the spice trade and, as Portugal herself had nothing to export and found it difficult to obtain bullion in Europe, she had to have access to commodities in demand in the spice trading areas. This encouraged her to try to establish monopolies in other branches of eastern commerce, the most important of which were to be the trade in horses from the Persian Gulf and gold and ivory trade from east Africa. In addition the Portuguese insisted that all traders operating in the western Indian Ocean carry a pass and present themselves at a Portuguese port to pay duties.

At first this system was only partially applied on the east African coast. Kilwa and Sofala were identified as the keys to the gold trade, the towns were seized and a royal trading factory installed, while much of the rest of the coast was forced to pay in gold or in goods for Portuguese protection. North of Kilwa, however, the captain of the coast of Melinde operated through an alliance with the ruler of Melinde who was allowed to continue his trade with Gujarat. The Portuguese largely left the Somali coast alone. Such a system need not have altered the essential pattern of Indian Ocean commerce. Gold and ivory exports would now be handled by Portuguese rather than Kilwa merchants, while the smaller coastal communities would continue to supply timber, cloth, food, etc. for the larger towns. India, for its part, would still receive the commodities it valued from east Africa and retain a market for its cloth.

Nevertheless the pattern of trade did begin to alter. In 1500, Kilwa and Sofala had already begun to lose their dominance in the gold trade and rivals had established themselves in the market. The Portuguese capture of these ports only encouraged merchants to switch their trade elsewhere and there was a boom in clandestine commerce operating out of Angoche and the Querimba Islands. The Portuguese reacted by trying to crush their rivals by seaborne attacks and had succeeded by 1530 in eliminating all independent trading centres south of Kilwa. The flow of gold, however, continued to dwindle until its profits ceased even to pay the expenses of the Portuguese forts and the crown contemplated abandoning the trade of east Africa altogether. Two developments, however, helped to revive the coastal economy, the emergence of Mozambique as a port of call and the growth of the ivory trade.

In 1500, Mozambique had been a boat-building settlement and it was this which first attracted the Portuguese who needed some port of call for their vessels coasting between Kilwa and Sofala. By 1507, there was a permanent Portuguese settlement on the island and this rapidly grew in importance while first Kilwa and then Sofala sank into obscurity. The Portuguese *naos* on their way from Lisbon to Goa began to stop at Mozambique to land their sick and to take on fresh supplies, sometimes remaining for a whole season if the monsoon had been missed. Large sums were spent maintaining the hospital and the ecclesiastical establishment and building the massive fortress of Saint Sebastian. Timber, coir, gum, cloth, basket-work, lime, stone and large quantities of goods were imported, in this way maintaining the economy of the smaller settlements such as the commercial wealth of Kilwa had once done.

Ivory, the commodity on which Africa's international trade in the western Indian Ocean was to depend for the next two hundred years, had been exported from the northern ports since long before the arrival of the Portuguese, but south of Kilwa it appears to have taken second place to the gold trade. By the 1530's, however, the Portuguese had begun to appreciate the potential of the ivory trade in the south and to establish an organization to exploit it. In theory it had been possible to concentrate the gold trade at one or two ports, but ivory could not be traded in this way for the weight of the tusks was such that they had to be brought to the nearest point on the coast. A string of trading stations had to be set up extending from Kilwa (which had been abandoned as a gold trading port as early as 1513) down the coast to the Zambesi where two river ports and the harbour of Quelimane were developed. Further south, ivory was traded at Sofala, at the old Muslim settlements of Chiluane and Mambone at the mouth of the Sabi. Beyond that ivory was bought regularly at Inhambane and a trading ship began to visit Delagoa Bay, beyond the point previously navigated, where ivory from the interior, as far south as Zululand, could be tapped.

The rise of ivory trading coincided with a major structural change in the Portuguese empire. The expense of maintaining royal trading factories was proving prohibitive and the monopolies they were designed to uphold were leaking badly, contraband being openly shipped with the connivance of royal officials. So the crown began to experiment with selling the monopolies to the captains of the forts and ships and this system quickly eliminated most traces of the old royal monopoly in the East. By the mid-1580's, the trading voyages from Goa to Mozambique were being sold and the captains of Mozambique were paid a lump sum and undertook to meet the full expenses of the fort. In return they enjoyed the crown's monopoly in ivory and gold. The captain's monopoly did not cover the whole of the southern coast but was limited to the Zambesi valley and the coast from Angoche to Sofala. The private traders of Mozambique fought to preserve their freedom to trade with Madagascar and the Comoro Islands and with the northern coast upto the Querimba archipelago. The trading voyages to Inhambane and Delagoa Bay continued to be made on royal account.

Something of the value of the gold and ivory trade can be deduced from the sums paid by the captains for their commands. The standard sum amounted to 40,000 cruzados a year, on top of which the captian had to pay the fortress expenses which in 1587 amounted to 13,147 cruzados. Even so, the captains expected immense profits and Mozambique was deemed the richest of the captaincies of the East after Hormuz.

The Portuguese could not have established their ivory trading network without the active participation of the local merchant class. As far as can be discerned, the capital was Portuguese, but derived from India not Portugal. The captains raised the price of their commands in Goa, but once in eastern Africa were dependent on local brokers well established in the trade. In Kilwa and Angoche, local factions emerged whose fortunes were linked with Portuguese trade, their commercial rivals in turn being politically anti-Portuguese. Elsewhere the Portuguese had to deal with chiefs who became powerful manipulators of the flow and the price of gold and ivory.

Muslim traders still trying to maintain an independent position in international trade were hounded out of business, which makes it all the more surprising that the Portuguese apparently ignored one corner of the old Muslim trading network altogether. Madagascar and the Comoro Islands had been reconnoitred by Portuguese ships in the early years of the century and the ports on the northern coast of Madagascar had been sacked by Tristan da Cunha in 1506. Thereafter Portuguese official interest in the area died as it was believed that the islands were of no importance in international trade.[10] However, as the independence of the other commercial centres was destroyed, members of their mercantile families settled in the Comoro Islands and 'Shirazi' dynasties, linked to the ruling élites of Zanzibar, Kilwa and Mogadishu, appeared in many

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[10] For the Portuguese in Madagascar see Albert Kammerer, *La Decouverte de Madagascar par les Portugais et la Cartographie de l'Ile* (Lisbon, 1950). Sources for the early Portuguese contacts with the islands are published in A. and G. Grandidier (eds.), *Collection des ouvrages Anciens concernant Madagascar*, 9 vols. (Paris, 1903-1920); for a recent discussion see, Newitt, 'The Comoro Islands in Indian Ocean Trade before the Nineteenth Century' *Cahiers des Etudes Africaines,* 23 (1983).

Comorian towns. To some extent the trade of this area continued to be based on the insatiable demand of the Mozambique markets for food. Indeed the importance of the islands to the supply of Mozambique may explain why the Portuguese were prepared to allow them to trade freely. However, by the end of the century the islands had established an important trade with the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and India. Cut off by the Portuguese, from the ivory and gold trade, the islanders had been forced to look for alternatives and had found them in the rapidly growing market for slaves.[11]

In 1500, there had been a thriving trade in slaves from the Somali towns to Egypt, the Persian Gulf and India. Kilwa imported slaves for her own use and the Portuguese employed some slaves as seamen, workers in the forts and interpreters. A market for African slaves also grew in Goa where they were employed as retainers and domestic servants. By the end of the century a few east African slaves were even finding their way to America. The Portuguese were not, however, the principle buyers of slaves in the Comoros, for large numbers were sold to traders from the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. Most of the slaves seem to have come from Madagascar but there is evidence that some may have been brought from mainland Africa for sale in the island markets.

The Coast North of Cape Delgado

The coast north of Cape Delgado was controlled by the captain of the coast of Melinde, whose task included the collection of tribute from the coastal towns and the mounting of patrols to intercept contraband. However, he did not exercise exclusive control over the ivory trade since he depended on the goodwill of the sultan of Melinde to provide him with a base of operations and Melinde was specifically excluded from the trade embargoes. As the northern towns were cut off from the gold trade, it has been suggested that they were forced to pay greater attention to tapping the resources of their own hinterlands. For example, Kilwa began, at this time to open trade routes towards central Africa and so tap a source of ivory that had been previously ignored.

The wars between Zeila and Ethiopia had seriously damaged the trade of the Somali towns. They were followed by a prolonged movement of the pastoral Galla into southern Ethiopia where they displaced many of the Bantu inhabitants who moved towards the coast, setting up a chain reaction of movement and displacement among the peoples already settled there. The coastal towns were vulnerable to being plundered by newly arrived groups who did not have the traditions of co-operation of their predecessors. In 1517 Zanzibar was occupied by hostile people from the mainland, in 1589 Mombasa was attacked by marauding groups and the town of Gedi was abandoned sometime early in the seventeenth century. Kilwa was attacked at about the same time. She may have been the vicitim of migrants from the south, for the coasts of Mozambique were raided in the 1580's by the Zimba who had come from Zambesia. The long term effects of these raids on the ivory trade need not have been fatal for the ivory was brought from far inland. But the raids appear to have devastated the population and destroyed argiculture and the cloth industry.

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[11] Newitt, 'The Comoro Islands in Indian Ocean Trade before the Nineteenth Century', op.cit.; although slaves were the staple of this trade other commodities were shipped. Food was sent to the Red Sea, while the Portuguese came to the Comoros to buy sandalwood and ginger. It is possible that these were re-exports of commodities coming from the East.

Turkish raids also served to inhibit trade. Turkish expeditions into the Indian Ocean had been a problem for the Portuguese since their first arrival and it was to defend Mozambique against the Turks that the fortress of Saint Sebastian was begun in the 1540's. Further successful raids in the 1580's revealed the vulnerability of the coastal towns and this, added to the uncomfortable knowledge that other Europeans were beginning to enter the Indian Ocean, prompted Portugal to undertake the last major expansion of her military power in the east. In 1593 work began on Fort Jesus at Mombasa and the decision was taken to erect a customs house and bring the trade of the northern coast fully under control.

The Arrival of the European East India Companies

Early in the seventeenth century English, French and Dutch companies began to trade with the East in earnest. Like the Portuguese before them, their main objective was the spice trade and at first they were little interested in Africa. Nevertheless the Dutch attacked Mozambique in 1607 and 1608 and the Mozambique Channel continued to be used as a highway for their ships, while many naval actions were fought in east African waters. Denied access to Mozambique, other Europeans made extensive use of the Comoros as ports of call.

The arrival of European trading ships at first made little impact on commerce in the region. The Portuguese were remarkably successful at holding on to their trade and at thwarting the attempts by Dutch and English to reconnoitre the coast. They either did not realize the value of the ivory trade or else concluded that they could not match the complex system of collecting ports which the Portuguese had established. The demands of European ships for food supplies did, however, stimulate commercial activity in the Comoro Islands and Madagascar. At first all four of the Comoro Islands were visited but by the middle of the century it was the open roadsteads of Moheli and Anjouan that were attracting most business. The visiting ships made heavy demands on the local economy, a single ship frequently buying a hundred heads of cattle as well as rice, fruit, coconuts and anything else on offer. Although food production

increased, the Comoros did not have the capacity to meet the demand and European ships increasingly sought out ports on the Madagascar coast, making particular use of St. Augustine's Bay in the south. In exchange for food Europeans gave cutlery, silver and paper. However, the greatest demand was for weapons or for bar iron which could be worked locally. The weapons were used in the chronic feuds between the islands occasioned by the slave trade and the competition for European business.

By mid-century, European companies had begun to develop alternative ports of call and the food and water supplies of the Mozambique Channel area were less needed.[12] At about the same time the seas around Mozambique were becoming infested with pirates. Piracy was a natural outgrowth of European rivalries. Ships of one nation waylaid those of another, even if they were not in a state of war or had an official commission. Piracy was also promoted by the clashes of ships loyal to King and Commonwealth in the English Civil War. In the second half to the century buccaneers from the Caribbean began to shift their operations to the Indian Ocean, cruising on the shipping lanes between India and the Red Sea and establishing their bases in northern Madagascar. The pirates were frequent visitors to the Comoro Islands, picking up information, disposing stolen goods and sometimes even raiding towns and villages. Their activities encouraged the European companies to press ahead with the development of their own ports of call and to increase their political and military activity in the western Indian Ocean. By the early eighteenth century the British had an informal protectorate over Anjouan and the French were established in the former Dutch island of Mauritius and were extending their influence in Madagascar. The pirates were harried out of existence by the 1730's but their legacy was a period in which the western Indian Ocean passed decisively into the spheres of enterprise of the English and French.

Portuguese East African Trade at its Height : Zambesia

After the initial Dutch attacks on Mozambique, the Portuguese made a serious attempt to settle the interior of Zambesia and to stimulate gold production by introducing Spanish mining techniques. Settlement failed and the Spanish miners found no ores that could be worked, but Portuguese backwoodsmen did conquer a considerable part of the southern interior, opened new gold washings and established trading fairs. Although expelled from the southern fairs in the 1690's, the Portuguese continued throughout the eighteenth century to open new gold diggings and trading fairs north of the Zambesi. The amount of gold exported increased sharply in the seventeenth century[13] and was enough to lubricate an extensive commerce in the interior and eventually to attract the attention of Indian capital. In 1671, the trading monopoly of the captain of Mozambique had been ended and, after various experiments, was replaced by a system whereby the import of cloth and beads became the monopoly of a state owned *Junta*. All traders had to buy imported items from the *Junta*, which could then be exported on payment of duties. The exports from Zambesia remained gold, ivory and foodstuffs, the attempts to start a sugar industry proving a failure.

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[12] The Dutch first took possession of Mauritius in 1598 and began the settlement at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652; the French had a station at Fort Dauphin on the Madagascar coast from 1644-1674 and took over Mauritius from the Dutch in 1715; the English took possession of St Helena in 1651 and established their sovereignty in 1673.

In the eighteenth century the Zambesi valley was the principal artery through which the trade and influence of the Indian Ocean circulated in the interior. Along the banks of the river the Portuguese had established their *prazos*—seigneurial lordships dominating large tracts of land and considerable numbers of Africans.

The Portuguese *senhors* of the *prazos* levied on their inhabitants tribute which frequently took the form of exportable commodities like gold and ivory. They also demanded their service as carriers, boatmen, gold diggers and fighters. The *prazos* also became the base of operations for the *mussambazes*, the professional traders who penetrated even further inland in search of fresh supplies of ivory

If the *prazos* supplied the infrastructure of central African trade, they helped to supply the capital structure as well. Capital had to be invested over a two year period as this was the length of time that a round trip by a trading caravan might take. For the wealthier seigneurial families the *prazos* represented the collateral against which capital could be raised, while tribute was also a form of capital accumulation. This combination of land seigneurial tribute, the control of manpower and access to the markets of the interior also proved attractive to Indian capital.

Indian finance came to Zambesia either in the form of Banian money, primarily invested in the cloth and ivory trade of Mozambique Island or with the Indians who came from the old Portuguese province of Goa and were referred to as Canarins. The Canarins were frequently Catholic and Indo-Portuguese. They were able to inter-marry with local Zambesi families and establish an Indian landowning, as well as trading, élite. By the early nineteenth century a majority of the leading Portuguese of Zambesia were probably of Canarin origin, including the Pereiras, the most influential trading family of the backlands.

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[13] Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa* (London, 1975), p.77; Fritz Hoppe, *Portugiesusch-Ostafrika in der Zeit des marques de Pombal* (Berlin, 1965), pp.16-22. Magalhaes-Godinho quotes contemporary estimates which appear to show the gold exports of east Africa rising from c. 573.75 kgs in 1985 to 1,487.5 kgs in 1667. See Magalhaes-Godinho, *L'Economie de l'Empire Portuguais aux 15 et 16 siecles* (Paris, 1969), p.273.

Portuguese East African Trade at its Height : Ivory

Until 1698, when Mombasa finally fell to the Omani, the Portuguese continued to dominate the trade of east Africa. The coast was divided between the captaincies of Mombasa and Mozambique and the trade in ivory continued to be the most vital single aspect of coastal trade. Until 1671 the trade of Mozambique remained organized as it had been at the end of the sixteenth century. Few figures exist on the volume or value of the ivory trade of Mozambique but in 1619 its value may have amounted to 100,000 cruzados a year. However the captains' monopoly was never as complete as they would have liked. During the seventeenth century the region north of the Zambesi was dominated by Maravi chiefs whose power extended to the coast. The Maravi traded both with the Portuguese captains on the Zambesi and with the settlers on MozambiqueIsland. This introduced an element of competition and effectively destroyed the captains' opportunity to fix prices.

In the extreme south the Portuguese traded with Inhambane and Delagoa Bay. By the early eighteenth century a permanent factory, exporting slaves as well as ivory, had been established at Inhambane and had begun to extend its influence among the surrounding Tonga. Delagoa Bay, on the other hand, remained primarily an ivory port to which the Portuguese sent annual trading ships. Three major chieftaincies controlled the shores of the Bay, with each of whom the Portuguese had separate dealings. Inevitably trade suffered from the ebb and flow of the rivalries of these chiefs and the volume of exports, although fairly regular, remained low.

In the early eighteenth century the Portuguese were challenged for control of the Bay by the English, the Dutch and the Austrians. For brief periods, Dutch and Austrian factories were established, but neither was successful, and by the end of the century the Portuguese were sharing the commerce with a few visiting English traders and American whalers. The involvement of other Europeans in the trade of the Bay led to a gradual diversification of its trade. In the seventeenth century, Indian beads had been almost the sole import and ivory the only export. In the eighteenth century, the English began trading in metalware from India and the demand grew for cattle as well as ivory. What had once been an ivory trading port, had become by 1800, a major centre for the cattle trade.

The demand for cattle might have shifted the emphasis of international commerce from the raw materials of Africa to products which required cultivation or production. However, it has been persuasively argued that the cattle exports of Delagoa Bay did not stimulate cattle ranching among the Thonga and Nguni so much as cattle raiding, thereby causing the elephant hunting band to evolve into the cattle raiding regiment of warriors with which Ndwandwe, Zulu and Matabele conquests were made in the early years of the nineteenth century.

North of Cape Delgado, the coast was under the jurisdiction of the captain of Mombasa. Mombasa had a customs house at which all traders had to pay a standard six per cent duty. To facilitate the collection of this, there was a branch of the customs house at Pate. The captain also collected tribute from the island rulers of Faza, Siu, Lamu and Pate. Technically the crown continued to operate an ivory monopoly, being the sole buyer of ivory brought to Kilwa and Mombasa. The crown also tried to monopolize the purchase of amber, tobacco and opium. In practice much of this trade was carried on by the captain who seems to have operated a personal monopoly similar to that of the captain of Mozambique. Local coastal trade continued to flourish. Cattle, rice, and palm products always found a good market, much of it being sent south to Mozambique. Boats continued to be built from coastal timber. Pitch, much in demand for the repair of Portuguese ships, was produced on Mafia Island as it had been 150 years earlier when the Portuguese first arrived.

Evidence about the volume and importance of the trade of the northern coast is conflicting. The returns of the customs houses at Mombasa and Pate were certainly small—estimated at between 6,750 and 9,000 cruzados. On the other hand it is clear that a large part of the trade of the coast was contraband and never passed the customs house at all. It was important enough to attract ships from northern India and raiders from Oman. Commerce also appears to have prospered between the Comoros and the northern ports.

Indian Commercial Capital

In the latter half of the seventeenth century it is clear that there was an unprecedented interest shown by Indian merchants in east African trade. During the sixteenth century direct Indian trade with Africa was partly excluded by the Portuguese trade monopolies. However Gujarat cloth continued to be in high demand and Indians must have provided much of the financial backing for Portuguese enterprise. Early in the seventeenth century, evidence suggested that Indians were once again actively participating in east African commerce. The English found Gujaratis trading in the Comoros and in 1617 captured a Portuguese vessel with Indian traders from Surat, Diu and Dabhol on board. A few years later there is reference to a guard ship sent from Mombasa to escort trading vessels coming from Diu, Bassein and Chaul.

The extent of the Indian mercantile penetration was fully recognized in 1686 when the Mozambique captain's monopoly having been wound up, the Portuguese decided to grant the right to import Gujarat cloth into Mozambique to a merchant guild from Diu. At approximately the same time the market for Arabian coffee began rapidly to expand turning Mocha and Luhaia from small fishing ports into flourishing commercial centres. Although English and Dutch moved quickly to invest in the coffee trade, it is clear that they did so through the agency of Indian coffee brokers and bankers and by the end of the century Banian capital was dominant in Arabia and the Red Sea.

The Decline in East African Commerce in the Early Eighteenth Century

In the sixteenth century commerce in the western Indian Ocean had benefited from the security guaranteed by the naval strength of the Portuguese. In the seventeenth century, however, the Portuguese were no longer able to police the seas. Shipping was attacked by English and Dutch vessels and piracy spread from the Mozambique Channel to the Red Sea region, preying on the richly laden Indian merchants ships which had been attracted by the boom in coffee. More serious than European pirates were the predatory attacks by ships from Oman. Independence movements in the twentieth century have encouraged some people to view the Omani raids as part of a struggle against Portuguese imperialism, but in the context of the seventeenth century they must be seen as organized piracy, the prey being the almost defenceless commercial centres of the east African coast. Although the Omanis did find allies, notably in Pate, most of the coast resisted them and Kilwa and Zanzibar stuck to the Portuguese connection for commercial reasons long after Portugal's military impotence had become obvious to all.

The fall of Fort Jesus to the Omani in 1698 led to the collapse of Portuguese power north of Cape Delgado. This may have been a liberation from colonialism but it also effectively destroyed the commercial life of the coast for the next forty years. Omani troops were installed in many of the former Portuguese trading factories. One consequence of this was that ivory caravans from central Africa, which had previously come to Kilwa under Yao leadership, were diverted south to ports still under Portuguese control. Indian capital concentrated at Mozambique, leaving the once prosperous towns of the Mrima coast sunk in a poverty and obscurity unique in their history.

The tensions between the Omani and the local Swahili community continued throughout the eighteenth century. Mombasa was able to establish a precarious independence from Oman but at the cost of continued depression of her commerce, for Indian merchants did not settle in areas of political instability. Zanzibar and Kilwa had, however, by the middle of the century, become reconciled to Omani overlordship and the stablity that resulted led to something of a revival of commerce at these ports. The fragmented accounts that survive show that much of this was of a traditional kind; ivory being exported to India together with some gold and cowries, with timber being sent to Muscat. Kilwa also became a base for Omani commercial penetration of the Portuguese sphere south of Cape Delgado. However, the real explanation for the economic revival of this region was the rapid development of the slave trade in the second half of the century.

Plantation Capitalism and the Rise of Slave Trade

For two thousand years the commercial relations of east Africa with the other countries of the Indian Ocean had followed a remarkably consistent pattern. The centres of commerce and the dominant merchant élite had changed, but as a commercial system it had remained much the same. Early in the eighteenth century, however, the basic structure of the Indian Ocean economy began to experience fundamental changes.

In 1715, the French took over the island of Mauritius, deserted for many years by the original Dutch settlers. In 1735, Ile de France, as it was now named, and its satellites, Ile de Bourbon (Reunion) and Rodrigues, began to experience a rapid growth in their plantation economies. Coffee was introduced from Mocha and sugar from the West Indies, while other crops, including wheat were successfully grown. The French were not just producing a modest surplus for the market as the inhabitants of the Comoros, Zanzibar and Pemba had always done, nor were they concerned merely with the supply of their merchant ships. They had embarked on a full scale capitalist enterprise with high investment and an overriding necessity to find markets for their produce. The dynamism of this plantation capitalism led to occupation, in 1768, of some of the Seychelles Islands which until that time had remained unpopulated and largely unvisited.

As sugar and coffee production rose, so also did the demand for slave labour. Initially the French bought in the established slave markets of Madagascar and the Comoros but, inspite of almost continuous warfare in Madagascar in the eighteenth century, the island could not supply French needs and slave ships began to visit ports on the Mozambique coast. Though their trade was technically illegal, the French were welcomed. They brought with them grain and other foodstuffs always in demand in Mozambique, and also silver coins. Mozambique officials were anxious to exploit the opportunities for private trade and felt that the French did not in any way endanger their traditional commerce in ivory.

As their demand for slaves grew, the French began to offer firearms for sale, a commodity in which the Portuguese had always been reluctant to deal. The response was considerable and new trading groups came to the fore. Mukua chiefs of the Mozambique lowlands for the first time began to take a prominent part in commerce. New trading ports emerged and old ones were revived. Mongallo, south of Kilwa, was an example of a trading port born of the slave trade, while settlements in the Querimba archipelago found a new commercial importance in slave dealing.

French slave imports reached their peak during the 1780's, when between 8,000 and 10,000 slaves were being brought annually from eastern Africa, but during the Revolutionary Wars this was reduced to a trickle. The French had, however, permanently altered the economic structure of the western Indian Ocean and the Portuguese had taken active measures to secure a portion of this trade for themselves. In the last two decades of the century about a third of the slaves had been exported in Portuguese ships, Brazilians had begun to enter the trade and Lisbon capital was being invested in the commerce of eastern Africa for the first time since the sixteenth century. Such developments ensured that the trade would continue even when the French ceased to be principal participants. By the early nineteenth century slave exports were reaching new heights with many of the American markets now being supplied from the Indian Ocean.

The profits of slavery were such that in the 1790's some chiefs of Madagascar began to mount their own overseas slaving expeditions. Large ocean-going canoes descended on the Comoro Islands and then proceeded further afield to the coasts of Mozambique. The coastal settlements geared to supplying slaves for the French, found themselves raided in their turn by the very people they had previously been accustomed to enslave.

The slave trade may, in other parts of Africa, have destroyed other forms of economic activity. In east Africa it appears to have been accompained by, and possibly to have been the cause of, considerable economic growth. Apart from their trade at Mozambique, the French sought to develop Kilwa as a slave trading centre and during the 1770's and 1780's she once again became pre-eminent on the coast. In addition to slaves there was a considerable export of ivory and cowries, as well as local trade in foodstuffs. The prosperity of Kilwa convinced the Busaidi dynasty of Oman to take a firmer hold of east African trade. By 1785, the decision had been taken to concentrate coastal commerce at Zanzibar and Banians were being employed to farm the customs there. With the coming of the Napoleonic Wars, the Omani were able greatly to expand their shipping and to take over much of the carrying trade in the western Indian Ocean which previously had used British and French ships.

The dues paid by the east African ports became, by the early nineteenth century, indispensible for the survival of the sultans but the Busaidi were not content merely to extract surplus by taking tribute from coastal trade. They began to experiment with plantation production and found the profits of this activity to be substantial. However, like the French before them, they found it needed a freely flowing supply of labour and a greater measure of political control. This phase of coastal history was to be completed when the sultan removed the centre of his government permanently to Zanzibar in 1840, but it had already been foreshadowed in the events of the end of the eighteenth century.

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Ceylon in the Indian Ocean Trade: 1500-1800

S. Arasaratnam

The island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), located on the major east-west trade routes of the Indian Ocean, and a producer of a number of commodities of value in Asian trade, was an important arena for the interplay of the commercial politics of the Indian Ocean. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the island was divided into three kingdoms: Kotte, situated about five miles inland from the port of Colombo; Kandy in the central highlands; and Jaffna in the peninsula to the north of the island.

The kingdom of Kotte was territorially the largest and politically the strongest, and controlled the important south-west lowlands towards which the Sinhalese population had drifted from the fourteenth century. A major port of Indian Ocean trade, Colombo, was under its control as were other satellite ports to the south of it, including Galle, which had not yet secured the importance it did later in the century. The kingdom contained most of the cinnamon woods in the hinterland of the coast. Cinnamon was exported through Colombo and other southern ports mainly by Arab merchants who had settled in Colombo and elsewhere. The king monopolized the sale of cinnamon but encouraged a free export market in Colombo. He had established good commercial relations with the Arab exporters, who had settled near the waterfront. The leaders of the different Arab communities helped in the administration of the ports and sometimes farmed the port dues from the king.

The other littoral state was the kingdom of Jaffna, the power of which extended along the western and eastern coasts of the northern half of the island. The chief port of this kingdom was Jaffna, a sheltered port in a lagoon to the south of the peninsula. There were the other ports of Point Pedro, on the northern-most point and Mannar on the west. The port of Kayts on an offshore island west of the peninsula was a deep water port that could admit large vessels. To the east was the excellent natural harbour of Kottiyar in the sheltered Trincomalee Bay suitable for the repair and refuge of ships in all weathers. Further to the south was the port of Batticaloa. The northern kingdom had the advantage of close political and cultural ties with the coastal Tamil states of Madura, Tanjore and Coromandel and these ties were extended into the commercial sphere. South Indian merchants sailed freely in and out of the northern ports and had established settlements there which went back many centuries. Elephants were exported from the northern as well as the southern ports. The ports along the middle of the western coast–Puttalam, Kalpitiya and Chilaw–were also important centres of the small boat traffic from southern India with settlements of south Indian Hindu and Muslim merchants. The interior kingdom of Kandy, land-locked and weak for many decades, achieved an importance in Indian Ocean politics with the destruction by the Portuguese of Kotte and Jaffna.

The Portuguese first established a fortified settlement in the port of Colombo in 1518 and soon became involved in the political turmoils of the kingdom of Kotte. The reigning monarch increased his dependence on Portuguese military and naval support and the Portuguese, spurred by the prize of the island's trade, pressed their advantage. By the end of the century, in 1597, the kingdom fell to the Portuguese and they then turned their attention to the northern kingdom and annexed it by stages in 1619. The Kandy kings carried on a valiant fight against the Portuguese. Thwarted by the absence of seapower, they decided to bring in the Dutch, who had made their first appearance in the waters around Ceylon in 1602. An uneasy alliance was negotiated between the king of Kandy and the Dutch and the two fought with increasing mutual suspicion against the Portuguese for twenty years (1638-1658). By the end of this war, the Dutch had replaced the Portuguese as rulers of the ports and the littoral leaving Kandy a land-locked kingdom.

Before the Portuguese established their control over the trade of Ceylon, its ports had been open to the traders of the Indian Ocean. Its cinnamon, shipped mainly to west Asia by Arab traders was famous in Asian markets. It also produced some pepper to supplement what merchants exported from Malabar. The main ports had markets where elephants were sold by auction and these were bought by Indian merchants on behalf of the powerful Indian rulers. Areca nuts were exported to India in large quantities. The pearls, fished from along the west-central coast, were another desired commodity of export trade. In return, the island imported textiles, rice and other food grains and edible oils from India. The nature of the trade was such that it embraced both the large, long distance oceanic traffic and the short, small boat traffic across the Palk Strait and along the island's coast. The ports of Colombo, Point Pedro and Kayts attracted the oceanic trade and the innumerable small ports were the home of the busy Indo-Ceylon traffic and of the island's coastal trade.

Ceylon's position in the contemporary international trade and traffic underwent significant changes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These changes were largely the result of policies pursued by the Portuguese and the Dutch, who successively controlled the littoral areas and were thus in a position to influence the pattern of trade in the ports of Ceylon. With both these powers, their control over maritime Ceylon was part of a broader Asian colonial and economic interests. These interests were based on sound naval power and strategy and passed through three stages, of complete Portuguese naval domination of the western Indian Ocean, to an era of naval struggle between the Portuguese and the Dutch, to a third phase of complete Dutch mastery, which continued, as far as the seas round Ceylon were concerned, till well into the eighteenth century. In all these stages, the island, with its strategic location at the foot of the Indian subcontinent, featured prominently. Commercial policies and changing patterns of commerce that resulted should be seen against this background of naval strategy and wider colonial interests.

Cinnamon assumed greater importance with the conquest of the island by the Portuguese, an importance which went on increasing under the Dutch. The Portuguese declared cinnamon a royal monopoly in 1614 but permitted its free export by licensed Portuguese officials and settlers. A number of Portuguese officials and settlers participated in its export often undermining the royal monopoly and the trade in cinnamon of the Crown. No cinnamon was sold in Ceylon to Asian merchants, all of it being transported in Portuguese ships to Asian ports. Efforts were made to control the supply in these ports and dictate prices but without success because of the freedom given to a number of Portuguese to trade privately in cinnamon. Prices fluctuated, depending on the volume of export and the quantities procured in Ceylon. Sporadic efforts to control this trade and operate the royal monopoly effectively led to periods of complete state monopoly in its export followed by the farming of the monopoly to a royal official, only to be abandoned and the trade freed to all Portuguese because of the pressure exerted by them. About half the cinnamon exported from Ceylon was sent to Europe, the other half being sold in Asian ports, mainy in the Portuguese ports of Goa, Cochin and Hormuz.

The control over production and supply enforced, however haphazardly, from the early decades of the seventeenth century, resulted in an increase in the price of cinnamon in the Asian markets. This trend was to continue throughout the century with a far more rigorously operated monopoly under the Dutch. The vast profits of the cinnamon trade were an incentive to greater production in Ceylon. In the 1620's, with the establishment of effective Portuguese control over large parts of the island, over 1,500 *bahar** of cinnamon was exported annually and in the 1630's and annual average of 2,000 *bahar* was reached. With the Dutch-Portuguese wars from 1638 onwards, Portuguese share of the cinnamon trade dwindled. By 1656, with the fall of Colombo to the Dutch, it was taken over completely by the Dutch.

In the other sections of the trade of Ceylon, the Portuguese did not introduce any major, long-standing changes but sought to participate in them. The sale of elephants in Ceylon was made a state monopoly but not the trade in them, as they were cumbersome to transport and the Portuguese did not have access to the inland markets of continental India. Likewise, the trade in areca nuts and cloth was left in the hands of the incumbent traders, with duties imposed on these articles for state revenue. The Portuguese themselves traded in these goods with the Indian mainland but the pattern of the trade was not altered. Puttalam, Kottiyar and a number of small ports in the Batticaloa area in the east, which were not controlled by the Portuguese carried on their customary trade through their traditional contacts with south Indian Muslims and Chetty traders.

Thus over the period of fifty years that the Portuguese dominated Ceylon the major change they effected was to cut off Ceylon's connection with the Arab-Indian Ocean trading system. In terms of commodities traded, this meant that the market for cinnamon was shifted to the Portuguese ports of western Indian Ocean. The Portuguese sought to centralize the trade of Ceylon to a few ports such as Colombo, Galle, Mannar and Jaffna to be able to tax the trade better. Of these, Colombo grew fastest as the major port of Portuguese trade and soon attracted other trading commodities and service people from the neighbourhood. Under them there was also the beginning of the growth of Galle into a major port of south Ceylon, and a port of call for Portuguese ships sailing from western India to the Portuguese ports of Malacca and Macao. Likewise in the north, the facilities of the port of Jaffna were extended and a small urban settlement grew around what had earlier been a waterfront village.

Though the Portuguese were hostile to Arabs and to other Muslim traders of the Indian Ocean and occasionally passed regulations restricting their migration and settlement in coastal Ceylon, this hostility subsided in Ceylon as in other parts of the Indian Ocean. During periods of persecution, Muslim merchants spread out to the smaller ports away from major centres of Portuguese power. Thus Puttalam and Kalpitiya grew as centres of Muslim trade; others spread out to the east coast ports of Batticaloa and Kottiyar. Some migrated inland to the Kandyan provinces. The Portuguese could not dispense with the Muslim shippers in the carrying trade of Ceylon and by the middle of the seventeenth century there were significant Muslim settlements in the major ports of Colombo, Galle, Jaffna and Mannar. The Portuguese were less hostile to Hindu merchants of southern India and northern Ceylon. Their activities continued and even increased under Portuguese protection. Chetty merchant communities were settled in Colombo, Negombo, Chilaw,

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* One Portuguese *bahar* is equivalent to about 380 pounds; the Dutch *bahar* is heavier at around 480 pounds.

Mannar and Jaffna and in Kottiyar and Batticaloa. These Chetty merchants had close links with the royal family in the interior Kandyan kingdom and were exporters of the kingdom's produce as well as suppliers of imports to its ruling elite.

When the Dutch replaced the Portuguese as the dominant power in coastal Ceylon, the pace of change was more rapid. Dutch commercial policies in the East were very different from those of the Portuguese. They operated a well-knit trading system which interlinked trade and investment in the ports of maritime Asia with the despatch of the annual return fleet from Batavia and Ceylon to the Netherlands. Ceylon was brought within the orbit of this system and subordinated to the overall interests of the Dutch East India Company's eastern enterprise. Company officers, imbued with the prevailing economic philosophies and commercial practices of the Netherlands, functioned as influential policy-makers and overlords in Ceylon. The attempt to acquire trade monopolies and impose restrictive practices was an intrinsic part of the commercial policies of this period. The East India Company itself was the archetype of such a monopoly organization.

The foundations of a cinnamon monopoly had already been laid by the Portuguese. It only remained for the Dutch to take it over and administer it more ruthlessly and efficiently. Far more stringent regulations, enforcing capital punishment for the slightest violation, were passed forbidding the transport and sale of cinnamon, or even tampering with the cinnamon tree. Trading in cinnamon was strictly prohibited to Dutch officials, as in fact was any form of private trading. The Dutch judiciously apportioned the supply of cinnamon to the European market and to the Asian market in an approximate ratio of five to one, thus restricting the amount of cinnamon available in the Asian market. The intention was to keep the price so high that it would not be profitable for competitors to purchase it for transport to Europe. Thus the Dutch hold on the European market was complete. They were able to do this better than the Portuguese, exerting control over the supply of cinnamon in the Asian market and their hold over all the ports of Ceylon and of the wild cinnamon of Malabar which was a competitor, though an ineffective one.

At the same time, there was an increase in the demand for cinnamon and other spices in Europe. As the sole suppliers of cinnamon to the European market, the possibilities of sale in Amsterdam were unending. The directors increased their order for cinnamon from 480,000 pounds in the mid-seventeenth century to 800,000 pounds a hundred years later. But the average annual export was more in the region of 650,000 pounds of which about 100,000 pounds was for the Asian market. A fleet of ships left from Colombo for the Netherlands in December, usually setting sail on Christmas Day, and joined with the larger return fleet from Batavia at the Cape of Good Hope where that fleet would have arrived earlier. Then the combined fleet sailed for Europe. The cinnamon for the Asian market was

sent in the Company's ships to the main market ports of Mocha, Gombroon, Surat, Wingurla, Hooghly, Masulipatnam, Pulicat, Porto Novo and Nagapatnam. A small quantity was sent to Batavia for the southeast Asian region. The sales in these ports provided bullion which could be used to purchase import articles for Ceylon or for investment in the Company's trade.

The Dutch were the sole suppliers of cinnamon to Europe and Asia for most of this period and were thus able to successfully regulate its price. In the Amsterdam sales the price of cinnamon nearly doubled to over 3 guilders per pound and stayed at that level, sometimes rising up to 4, 5 or even 6 guilders, depending on the availability. Likewise the price in the east, which in the first half of the seventeenth century had never risen above 15 stuivers per pound and was often well below that, was now raised by the Dutch steadily to, at first 20 stuivers (or 1 guilder), then 30 stuivers and finally fixed at 48 to 50 stuivers a pound in 1660. The price was maintained at this level despite the protestation of the Company's officials in Ceylon that it was far too excessive and that sales would be affected. That there was a clear profit is seen from the fact that the cost price was next to nothing. The cinnamon was peeled from the woods by a caste of labourers who delivered fixed quantities as obligatory service. They were paid a pittance, 72 stuivers for a *bahar* of 480 pounds, for any additional cinnamon supplied.

Ceylon itself did not benefit from this enlarged export potential of one of its products. Cinnamon was not sold in the island's ports to any incoming trader and as such the country was deprived of the use of a commodity of exchange for its imports. The profits of cinnamon did not appear even in the Dutch accounts of their Ceylon administration. The sales in Europe appeared as profits in the Netherlands chambers of the Company and the sales in the various ports counted as profits in those ports. It considerably reduced the viability of Ceylon's Indian Ocean trade and removed a lucrative commodity from the free market and from the commercial transactions of private ships sailing to Ceylon.

Apart from cinnamon, there was still in the mid-seventeenth century a brisk sea traffic in and out of Ceylon that brought her into close trading relationship with a number of ports of southern Asia. There were still other lucrative products of export and a number of items of import that this trade embraced. The trade involved both large scale, relatively longer voyages in ships, as well as the smaller peddling trade in small one-masted *thonies* plying the shorter routes from the island to the southern part of the Indian mainland.

Of large scale shipping, the most regular and commercially significant was the traffic from Bengal and north Coromandel (Golconda). These vessels sailed into Galle and Jaffna right round the year, except during the worst months of the northeast monsoon. They were owned by powerful Muslim merchants of Golconda and the Mughal Subahs, some by the Nawabs of Bengal and Cuttack and other Mughal military officials. Each vessel was under the charge of a *nakhoda* who was empowered to transact business on behalf of owners and shareholders of the cargo. Sometimes, English and Portuguese merchants used to own or have shares in these vessels. By this method they sought to break the strict Dutch regulation against the trade of other Europeans in the ports of Ceylon. The Bengal vessels brought in rice as their major cargo and this was a vital function of the trade. Ceylon, in this period, was a rice importing area and an interruption in the overseas supply would have caused serious shortages. Rice from Bengal and Coromandel was cheaper than that from Canara, the other supplementary source of supply. The arrival of the Bengal rice kept its price reasonably low during this entire period, though there was a general tendency for a rise in the price of this commodity, caused by the wars and civil conflict on the Indian mainland. Besides rice, the Bengal traders brought sugar, butter, vegetable oils and a few other exotic foodstuffs for which Bengal was famous. They also brought fine varieties of textiles – silks and muslins – which were a specialized skill of the weavers of upper Bengal. These goods were bought for retail by established wholesalers and brokers in the island.

On their return voyage, the vessels took a wide assortment of Ceylonese produce. During the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth century, they exported a considerable number of elephants, in demand in Bengal, in war operations, as draught animals and for ceremonial occasions. Elephants fetched high prices, both in Ceylon and in India, and the Bengal and Golconda merchants invested a great deal of money in them. Their sale provided much of the exchange necessary for the purchase of rice, leaving this trade with a balance always in Ceylon's favour. The Bengal merchants in addition to their full load of import cargo, would draw bills of exchange on the Dutch factories in India for any additional investment they wished to make. Other articles exported by them were areca nuts, *chanks*, cowries, pearls and spices in controlled quantities. *Chanks* were sea-shells much desired in Bengal for ornamental and ceremonial purposes. Cowries were, likewise, smaller delicate shells used as ornaments and even as coins.

A less regular traffic existed with the ports on the west coast of India: Surat, Wingurla, Cannanore, Calicut and Cochin. It was mixed in the nature of its participants and the articles it took in. Rice again was an important commodity of import, followed by textiles, timber and different kinds of Middle Eastern goods. They took back areca nuts, coir, and ropes, Kandyan lacquer work, and handicraft products of varying description. Cinnamon and spices were forbidden to them as they would have competed with Dutch sales in their ports of origin.

A third region with which Ceylon had trade ties was the southern coast of India, extending from Travancore, through Madura, Tanjore to south Coromandel up to about Pulicat and Fort St. George (Madras). This trade consisted at one end, the substantial ocean-going vessels, owned by the wealthy Chetty and Chulia Muslim merchants of Coromandel, that took in Ceylon on their sailings anywhere between the Red Sea and the Indonesian archipelago. At the other end there were the one-masted *thonies* that would sail in their hundreds from the ports across the narrow straits between Ceylon and India. Between these two extremes ranged a large number of vessels of varying sizes and description. They sailed from any one of the many ports and shallow havens of this coast and made the journey in four or five days time with a stiff breeze. The ownership of these vessels was very mixed. There was a large element of Tamil and Malabar Muslims. Their strongholds were Quilon, Kayalpatnam, Ramnad, Nagapatnam and Nagore. Some of the Muslims had blood relations settled in Puttalam, Mannar, Galle and Batticaloa in the island of Ceylon. Some others had a dual domicile living long periods in Ceylon and India. They were both large scale traders and pedlars. Chetty and other Hindu castes were perhaps numerically the largest among these traders. They too ranged widely in the scope of their activities. There were Chetty families that had been settled for long in ports like Colombo, Galle and Jaffna with whom the incoming traders had dealings. Tamil Hindus of Jaffna also functioned as their brokers and agents. Finally, there were the Parava Catholics who had flourished under Portuguese protection and had now emerged from being solely fishermen and boatmen into traders. In Ceylon these vessels would sail not only into the major ports of Colombo, Galle and Jaffna but also into a number of other smaller ones: Kalipitiya, Puttalam, Mannar, Mullaitivu, Kottiyar, Batticaloa, Matara, Panadura, Kalutara, Negombo, Chilaw — in fact into every inlet and creek where they could drag their boat to shore and peddle their wares.

It is difficult to estimate the volume of their trade but it could be easily seen that it was a lifeline to the peasant economy of the island. The major articles of import were textiles, particularly the coarser varieties within the reach of the peasant consumer. There was among these a particularly desired cloth called the *cachai*, a coarsely woven white cloth of about two yards length, worn as a loin-cloth by the peasant, a standard and universal dress worn on all occasions. There were other dyed and painted varieties for the women and materials of finer weave for the richer sections of the population. Another item of import was rice, which because of the shorter distance, was cheaper and served to fill in shortages in particular areas due to crop failures in the absence of other imported rice. The vessels also brought salt and salted fish to those parts of the island which lacked them. The major item of export was areca nuts or betel nuts—the nuts of the areca palm, dried and chewed with the betel leaf, a habit to which almost the entire south Indian population had become addicted. The areca tree was cultivated in almost every home in the island and was found in greater abundance in the wet zones of the south, southwest and centre. The nuts which each peasant collected from his garden thus gave him the vital exchange to purchase his requirements in textiles, salt and other necessities from these traders. A group of itinerant pedlars, generally Muslims from the south and southwest, acted as the middlemen who distributed the textiles to the peasants and collected the areca nuts. Other items of local produce exported by these merchants included coconut and coconut products, coir ropes and fibres, palmyrah wood and handicraft products of local artisans.

The political unrest occasioned by the Sinhalese wars against the Portuguese and the subsequent Dutch-Portuguese wars in the first half of the seventeenth century, did not cause any interruption to this trade. It adjusted to these conditions by avoiding the larger ports, the centres of military and naval activity, and sheltering in the smaller ports such as Puttalam and Kalpitiya in the west and Kottiyar and Batticaloa in the east. Early Dutch observers noted hundreds of vessels sailing in and out of all these ports to carry on a brisk trade. There had also been a shift to the east of the island where there was little or no military or naval hostility. Though these areas were far less populated than the west, they had the advantage of an unrestricted communication with the Kandyan kingdom, where this trade found an excellent market. When the Dutch conquered and fortified Kottiyar, they found a huge bazar a few miles to the interior, in the village of Killewatty. A Chetty merchant had been appointed as the receiver of the royal tolls by the king of Kandy on all goods sold in this market.

There was also a small coastal trading system, operating from port to port, largely run by the fishermen castes of Ceylon. It look rice and salt from regions of abundance to those of scarcity and collected areca nuts from remote coastal villages to the main ports of export. Its greatest value was in linking the productive but less populated eastern lands with the west and south, as also the north with its flourishing handicraft production with the markets to the south.

It will be noted, from the above description of the island's trade, that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was no Ceylonese shipping overseas. This was just as well, because any Ceylonese effort in this direction would have been stifled by Dutch commercial policies as they now began to unfold. Some Ceylonese Dutch burgher shipping made its appearance in the first years of Dutch rule but soon folded up, finding it impossible to continue in the face of restrictive Dutch regulations. Some Sinhalese and Tamils functioned as brokers and agents, and as retailers. Some Kandyan nobles went into partnership with the Chetty and Muslim traders from southern India to invest in ventures to south Indian ports. Strangely enough, Sinhalese nobility of the low country did not take to this practice which was popular in the south Indian kingdoms. Generally speaking, the indigenous ruling groups tended to stay away from commerce and this partly explains the dominance of foreign elements in this sphere.

It was against a backdrop of this commercial scene that Dutch policy began to unfold. And this evolving policy in turn deeply affected the structure of commerce and, to some extent, the overall economic system. Within a few years of the consolidation of Dutch power in Ceylon, they were able to see the island's commercial potential. They could see that it was a country with a brisk trade, not merely in exotic and luxury items, but also in consumer goods. The Dutch had already successfully and exclusively controlled the trade in cinnamon. Looking around for other articles of monopoly, elephants appeared as another possible commodity. Again the pattern had been established by the Portuguese, it only remained to render more efficient the machinery of sale. The elephants trapped in the jungles of south and north-central Ceylon were marched to the markets of Galle and Jaffna. The animals were held in stalls with prices fixed for each of them. Jaffna was the main market for sale and at Kayts harbour there was a pier specially constructed for the easy shipping of these cumbersome animals. The traders were represented at the sales by brokers who would inspect the animals and settle on a negotiated price. Throughout the seventeenth century the sales were good and netted between 100,000 to over 200,000 guilders each year. The revenue from the elephant trade was the biggest single item of revenue and sometimes represented 30 per cent of the total income from trade.

In 1697, the system of individual sales through brokers was abolished and public auctions adopted. The long-standing and influential buyers were dissatisfied with this innovation and lost interest in the trade. This alarmed the Dutch who reinstated the old method of individual sales in 1707. They still wanted to break the influence of the brokers who, they felt, made exorbitant commission and had the merchants under their control. In 1710, governor Becker (1707-1716), noting that there was a good deal of corruption in Jaffna in the elephant trade, moved the market to Colombo. Bengal and Coromandel merchants refused to go to Colombo but preferred to buy in Jaffna. In 1713, the Batavian government ordered the transfer of the market to Jaffna. The trade showed a marked improvement. But this revival was only temporary for the decline of the Mughal empire reduced the demand for elephants. From 1720, the trade was on the decline. Sales very seldom were above 100,000 guilders a year. A serious effort was made to improve the trade by reducing prices and trying to establish contacts with merchants in Indian factories. But all this was of no avail and by 1750, the elephant trade fetched little more than 25,000 guilders per year. By the end of the century the trade had disappeared.

The Dutch realized that in order to dominate the trade of Ceylon and to fashion it according to their wishes, they had to extend their control to the remaining ports of the island. Kalpitiya was occupied and fortified in 1659, from where the entry to Puttalam could be checked. The east coast port and fort of Trincomalee was taken in 1666 and Kottiyar and Batticaloa in 1668. With the construction of lookout posts in Panama and Magama in the southeast, the whole coastline was dotted with strategic points of control and inspection. The territorial expansion between 1666 and 1670, which doubled the territory and population under Dutch rule, secured a market for textiles and areca nuts which they began to exploit, at first in competition with the existing traders. These years of competition were not successful. The margin of profit considered satisfactory for the Indian traders was not sufficient for a large Company. There were problems of distribution in the villages and problems of supply in the Indian mainland:

A major decision was taken in 1670 to monopolize a predominant part of the island's trade. The following export articles were declared Company monopolies: cinnamon, elephants and elephant tusks, areca nut, *chanks* and pearls; and for import: cotton goods, pepper, tin, zinc and other minerals. Rice was the only major item of import left out of the monopoly. The main purpose of these regulations was to capture the import market in textiles and the areca nut export market exclusively. It was estimated that a monopoly of this trade would produce a revenue of 1,500,000 guilders. A series of regulations were put into effect to enforce this monopoly. All vessels sailing into Ceylon had to secure passes from the nearest Dutch factory in India. The passes would state the port of destination and the goods carried. Passes were given only to the large, well-policed ports of Colombo, Galle and Jaffna where they could be put under surveillance. Vessels were intercepted in the high seas and, if found carrying textiles to Ceylon or bringing areca nuts from there, were seized and confiscated. The vessels plying in the narrow straits between Ceylon and the Indian mainland were the most difficult to police. It was ordered that boats sailing northwards to Coromandel from the west coast ports should go through the narrow channel between Mannar Island and mainland Ceylon. As boats could not sail through this shallow channel fully loaded, they had to unload and have their cargo carried by land to the northern end of the channel where they would reload. At this point a customs inspection was carried out, comparing their cargo with their passes and checking for contraband.

In addition to these punitive measures, efforts were made to keep the country supplied with textiles and to collect and export all the areca nut in Dutch vessels. Capital was released for investment in cotton goods for the Ceylon market in Madura and Tanjore. These were distributed through the Company's stores. The areca nut produce of the villages was bought through native officials through laws ensuring compulsory delivery.

In ten years of the operation of this monopoly, adverse economic consequences of Dutch policy became visible. Prices of textiles, even of the

coarse varieties, shot up as the Dutch were unable to supply at rock bottom prices charged by the Indian traders. As monopoly buyers of areca nut, the Dutch thought they could reduce prices offered to the peasants and this left the peasants with little incentive to sell their produce to the Dutch. An overall decline in this trade was noted in the 1670's and 1680's. The inevitable increase in smuggling by those boats that could sail in shallow waters and avoid Dutch cruisers caused dents in the monopoly of textiles and areca nut. An expensive cruising operation with armed sloops had to be mounted which went on well into the eighteenth century.

A more drastic consequence was the interruption of the large scale traffic from Bengal and north Coromandel. These merchants found that they could not buy or sell goods in the open market any more. They had to sell to the Dutch and buy from Dutch stores and some of the items they had traded in were now contraband. Their operations were hampered and so they stopped coming as regularly and in as large numbers as before. One of the effects of this was the shortage of rice supply which they had brought in ample quantities. The Dutch found that they had to transport rice in their own vessels to relieve this shortage, both for their own men and for the community. An overall decline in trade and traffic was reported in the 1680's and general shortage of food and clothing in the community at large.

A partial liberalization of trade was begun in 1694, with the relaxation of some of the earlier restrictions. The boat traffic from Madura and Tanjore was eased with a more liberal issue of passes and a greater freedom to import textiles, though with a high tariff. More importantly, the Bengal shippers were encouraged to resume their sailings to Jaffna and Galle with greater freedom to deal with Ceylonese private traders and permission to import certain varieties of cloth. Duties on cotton goods of 20 per cent were lowered for these Bengal merchants to 7½ per cent. The restriction to sail only to the capital ports was also relaxed and trade in the lesser ports was reactivated once again. These reforms had their desired effect. The Bengal traffic was resumed. The Coromandel and Madura boatmen came back in larger numbers though their freedom was still restricted. The supply position, as far as rice and textiles were concerned, improved enormously.

From the experience of these years, a policy was evolved of separating the boat traffic of south India from the rest of the boat trade, and dealing strictly with the former. Their operations were seen to be most harmful to Dutch trade. They glutted the market with cheap textiles and were able to pay a higher price to the peasant for his produce. They had better contacts in the villages and were able to sail into shallow waters. All this affected the sale of cloth imported by the Dutch and the purchase of areca nut, pepper and other products. Hence in 1704, selective controls were imposed. While the Bengal, Surat and north Malabar traders were encouraged with incentives, the south Coromandel boatmen were put under restrictions, though not as severe as in 1670. The number of ports they could sail into was stipulated and they were forbidden from landing on the east coast. It was impossible to police them here as the Dutch had only two ports in this whole coastline. A duty of 15 per cent was imposed on the cotton goods they brought and certain varieties of cloth were prohibited. They had to buy the areca nuts from the Dutch at a fixed price and not elsewhere. They could not land at any other port. The ports they were permitted to sail into and the goods they carried were inscribed in their passes which were subject to inspection on the high seas. The traders continued to carry on their trade under these restrictions, largely because of their resilience, the corruption that was endemic among Dutch officials, and the great familiarity of these boatmen with the island's coastline where they could take shelter from Dutch cruisers.

A great deal of corruption was possible by agreement between the trader and the official. The authorities in Holland were aware of this and they constantly exhorted that regulations be severely administered. Governor Becker discovered that in Galle the chief officers of the Company had formed a partnership which they called the 'Small Company' to carry on illegal private trade in textiles. Such corruption was the chief reason why this traffic was able to continue till the end of the eighteenth century—a source of comfort to the local community. Despite the advantage of regulations heavily biased in their favour, the Dutch profits on textiles, in the mid-eighteenth century, amounted only to around 100,000 guilders a year. This compares with a turnover of about 250,000 guilders in the private sector and with an expectation of 500,000 guilders a year. In the second half of the eighteenth century, it declined even further to around 40,000 guilders, caused partly by the situation in the textile-producing villages in southern India creating problems of supply. The profits on the areca nut trade amounted to 200,000 guilders in the good years in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. It later declined gradually to no more than 100,000 guilders in the second half of the century.

Governor Baron Van Imhoff (1736-1740) had visions of making Ceylon a major emporium of trade in south Asia. He wanted the freedom to sell a wide variety of merchandise in the ports of Ceylon so that traders from all over south Asia could be attracted there and the island would become a centre for the exchange of goods from many regions of Asia. He suggested that the Company's expensive establishment on the Indian mainland and in Persia could be reduced because the functions performed there could well be performed from Ceylon. These changes were too drastic and involved a major overhauling of Dutch Asian commercial policy which the Directors were reluctant to undertake. But, during his tenure, he did lift some of the restrictions to encourage Indian traders and even the trade of other

Europeans. This policy was continued by governor Van Gollenesse (1743-1751) and led to some recovery of trade in Ceylon.

Two instances of trade to specific places in certain items may be noted. There was a regular traffic between Ceylon and the Maldive Islands which continued throughout this period without interruption. The vessels sailed from the Maldives at the break of the northeast monsoon bringing cowries and *kumbelamas*. Cowries were used in the Indian trade and exported to Europe. *Kumbelamas* was a particular variety of dried fish much desired by the Sinhalese. The Dutch had monopoly over cowries. On their return trip the vessels took spices, areca nuts, rice and some trifles. The Dutch wanted to secure a larger supply of cowries and in the 1730's equipped an annual voyage to the Maldives. After a few years the market for cowries dropped in Europe and the voyage was abandoned. In recognition of a traditional obligation, the Sultan of the Maldives sent the Dutch, as sovereign of coastal Ceylon, a tribute of cowries.

Another trade was the tobacco trade between Jaffna and Malabar. The tobacco grown in Jaffna was in great demand in Travancore. Tobacco was a monopoly of the raja of Travancore and the trade was carried on his behalf, by the merchants of Quilon. About 120,000 pounds were transported each year. The tobacco merchants of Quilon had agents from Travancore resident in Jaffna who went to the tobacco farms in April when the crop was ready for harvest. They made advance payments for the entire crop to be sold to them at market price. On harvest the price was fixed and the agents bought up all the produce. The tobacco was transported to their warehouses in Jaffna in August and September where it was sorted out and bundled in bales. The entire cargo was taken to Quilon and sold to the raja who then sold it within the kingdom at a fixed price. This was a monopoly he carefully guarded and neither the merchants of Jaffna nor the Dutch had any share in the transactions. This trade continued well into the nineteenth century.

There was a possibility of a flourishing export trade in coffee but again Dutch policy and interests came in the way and stifled its growth. Coffee production was encouraged in the 1720's but its cultivation did not catch on for some time. It progressed gradually in the 1730's and by 1739, a substantial quantity was being collected for export. It was a Dutch monopoly and was shipped to Indian and Persian ports where it competed successfully with Arabian coffee. At the same time, Javanese coffee production increased phenomenally, and the Dutch were over-supplied with coffee. In the 1740's, Governor Gollenesse was instructed from Batavia to discourage its cultivation and by the second half of the century it had declined significantly.

The trade of Ceylon operated partly as a monopoly and partly as a competitive trade. The monopoly sector embraced all the valuable cash crops and this skimmed the cream of the island's commercial potential. In respect of these commodities—cinnamon, cardamom and pepper—the Company rigorously maintained an export monopoly. In respect of areca nuts, *chanks* and a few other items, the Company held monopoly rights of purchase but sold them to private exporters at market prices. In the import trade, the Company retained for itself the lucrative varieties of textiles and imposed high tariffs on all other varieties. Thus the trade of Ceylon was hedged in with a multitude of controls and restrictive tariffs to turn the terms of trade in the favour of the Company. Despite all these restrictions, traditional trading patterns continued. The island's geographical location and the nature of the commercial economy of the region ensured the continuance of traditional trading patterns. It ensured the survival of the merchant communities living along the coast bordering the Indo-Ceylon straits and of the ports along this coast.

Ceylon was brought into a wider network of international trade by the Dutch East India Company's trading enterprise. The presence of the Dutch with their large military, naval and civilian establishment, their merchant and naval fleet, generated the growth of major ports and dock facilities. The pursuit of a vigorous mercantilist policy hindered the benefits of this growth seeping down into indigenous society. The benefits of increased prices for the island's cash crops were not passed on to the producers. Purchase prices were kept at an artificialy low level while sale prices of imported goods were increasing. This kept large numbers of people out of the market and by the end of the eighteenth century there was little activity in the exchange of goods involving the bulk of the community.

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11

The Maritime Trade of Indonesia : 1500-1800

Arun Das Gupta

The Malay-Indonesian archipelago is a geographically fragmented area open to outside contact. In the period under study its maritime trade formed part of the Indian Ocean trading world having vital linkages with south China. Historians of Asia's sea trade have generally looked upon Indonesia as a transit area, a passage to be crossed to reach south China from the west. This was a place where long-distance voyages were broken and ships were changed. Yet looked at from within, Indonesia was a trading world in its own right. Wolters[1] has shown that long before the all-sea route to China came into its own around fifth century AD, traders from India and Sri Lanka used to visit Indonesia to look for local products like gold and medicinal herbs and not to catch up with the China trade. They were in turn followed by Arabs and Persians. It is true that when the Chinese began to turn to the trade of the southern seas they were more interested in west Asian products coming through southeast Asia than in goods produced in the region itself. Eventually China too began to import Indonesian products like camphor and sandalwood, pepper and spices. Thus apart from being a link in the trans-Asian trade Indonesia had a foreign trade of her own. Together with this international trade there was a thriving inter-island trade within the archipelago. To study the development of the maritime trade of Indonesia one has to bear in mind the three levels of Indonesian trading activity and try to grasp the connection between them.

From the earliest times, Indonesia's sea trade was under the control of its coastal kingdoms. Under normal circumstances one would presume that traders would prefer to carry on business on their own without any interference from state powers. But the growth and expansion of trade lead to competition and conflict inviting political interference. The need for protection made the trader seek political legitimization. Thus spontaneous trade unconcerned with politics became transmuted into trade between recognized kingdoms.

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[1] Wolters,O.W., *Early Indonesian Commerce* (Ithaca, 1967).

Western Indonesia (which in our period included Malaya) was a point of convergence for a number of trade routes. There was the route across the Isthmus of Kra in northern Malaya. It was in use before the Straits of Malacca became a part of the all-sea route to China between the third and fifth century AD. The second route running through the Straits of Malacca split into two branches at the southern tip of the Malayan peninsula. One branch went toward China skirting the Indo-Chinese peninsula; another plunged southeast in the direction of north Java whence it stretched away to the spice islands of eastern Indonesia. Finally, at a later period, traders coming from the West used a third route passing along the west coast of Sumatra, through the Sunda Strait into the Java Sea in order to reach the port towns of eastern Java.

It is natural to expect these long-distance routes to generate and sustain wayside kingdoms. As a crucial transhipment area western Indonesia had a whole crop of maritime kingdoms strung along the sea lanes. Such a situation called for a strong maritime empire capable of creating stable conditions for the upkeep of international commerce passing through the region. What it means to be an integral part of the trans-Asian trade structure is well exemplified by the classic case of Srivijaya. Wolters[2] sees a vital connection between Chinese maritime policy and the integrity of the Srivijayan empire. For a long time after the opening of the sea trade of China, the Chinese preferred to stay at home and depended upon Arab and Persian merchants for the import and export of goods. From seventh century onwards, Malay traders and shippers of the Srivijayan empire began doing a thriving business with China along with west Asians.

The sea trade of China was controlled by what is known as the Tribute System. From the Chinese point of view, the foreign traders were looked upon as bearers of tribute to the Chinese emperor from whom they received gifts in return. The geographical location of Srivijaya enabled it to play a very crucial role in the final phase of the carrying trade to China. Palembang, the capital of Srivijaya, was the last stop to China for traders coming from the west. When the wind was right a ship usually took about twenty days to reach Canton from Palembang. It seems that between the seventh and thirteenth century, the intermediate trade between western Indonesia and south China was dominated by Srivijaya.

The Chinese themselves did not show much interest in sailing out to the Malacca Strait region before the ninth century. With the greater use of the compass in the following centuries the sea-going vessels of China began to venture out in the Indian Ocean area. In the twelfth century the Chinese ships were trading with Quilon in south India. As the Chinese themselves made frequent voyages through the Malacca Strait in their own ships the intermediary role of Srivijaya as a carrier of China trade became increasingly superfluous. Consequently the Srivijayan empire began to break up in the thirteenth century. The core of the kingdom of Srivijaya, however, survived till the last quarter of the fourteenth century when the unpredictable shifts in the maritime policy of the Mings in the reign of Tai-tsu (1368-1398) brought about its final disintegration.

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[2] Wolters,O.W., *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (Ithaca, 1970).

Perhaps Wolters has overstressed the Chinese side of Srivijaya's overseas trade. In a later article[3] he concedes that the Indian Ocean aspect of Srivijaya should also be gone into in greater detail. Allowing for minor modifications, the Wolters thesis is basically right in arguing the close interdependence of Srivijaya and the China trade. Not much is known however about Srivijaya's foreign trade with countries other than China and about its specific role in the inter-island trade of Indonesia. It seems that in the long run over-integration with the trans-Asian trade proved to be disastrous for Srivijaya. When its China trade was disrupted there remained hardly anything else to fall back on. The maritime supremacy of Srivijaya in western Indonesia was maintained in the face of acute competition. Thus the Cholas of Coromandel from the west and the Javanese from the east questioned the monopolistic claims of Srivijaya.

Within the archipelago the rise of east Java as an alternative centre of international trade could not be prevented. By the time of Airlangga (1019-1049), the ports of east Java had established trade connections with the spice islands in the east and Sumatra and Malaya in the west. What was more, the port-town of Tuban in east Java was attracting foreign merchants from Malabar, Coromandel, Sri Lanka as well as from Indo-China. The political and commercial ascendancy of Java continued through the following centuries.

Whether one accepts Kertanagara (1268-1292) as a successful empire-builder or not, it has to be admitted that he was the first Javanese king to conceive the idea of politically unifying the archipelago against external threats. By the middle of the fourteenth century, the Majapahit empire (1293-1520) had made its impact felt over the whole of Indonesia. Srivijaya was already a spent force. It is true that Gajamada's bid to create a unified Nusantara was never fully realized. Yet even the semblance of unity which he was able to project was of great symbolic value. For over two hundred years the Majapahit empire held sway as the unquestioned authority in the archipelago. After the fall of the empire its image became a legacy worth cherishing. It is worth noting that Majapahit was a sea-power, as much as Srivijaya had been, and its powerful fleet shielded an inter-island trading system which was fast evolving within the fold of the empire.

For a classic description of the inter-island trade of Indonesia one has to turn to the writings of Bernard Schrieke[4]. From Portuguese and Dutch sources Schrieke was able to reconstruct a pattern of inter-island trade which, he thought, was roughly valid for 1400 AD. Essentially it was a pattern of east-west exchange of goods within the Indonesian archipelago with Javanese rice being carried everywhere. The central fact of Indonesian trade was that the two major products—pepper and spices—were located at the two extremities of the archipelago. Pepper was produced in Sumatra, Malaya, west Java and Borneo. Spices—cloves, nutmeg and mace—were available only in the eastern island groups of the Moluccas and the Bandas. Java produced rice, salt, salt-fish and a variety of foodstuff as well as some cotton, thread and textiles. In Schrieke's opinion the initiative in inter-island trade lay with the Javanese. Rice and other Javanese products were carried by Javanese traders and junk-owners to Sumatra to have them exchanged for pepper and other foreign goods. Pepper was then taken to Java and further on to Bali in order to collect in exchange Balinese cotton fabrics which were in great demand in the spice islands. In the final stage the Javanese sailed out to the Moluccas and Bandas carrying rice, other Javanese products, Balinese cloth, along with Indian textiles and Chinese porcelain, silk and small coins. Indian and Chinese goods had already been brought to north Javanese port-towns by the continental merchants themselves.

Production of cloves, nutmeg and mace was controlled by the noblemen of the eastern islands. They worked their plantations with slaves and after harvests collected the spices in their own houses. There they hung up weighing scales in their yards and sold the spices in small quantities. It was not a wholesale trade but what Van Leur liked to call 'a multitudinous peddling trade'. Every year about 40 Javanese junks (of about 60 tons each) arrived in the spice islands with the western winds. They pulled up their junks on dry land and set up temporary booths. There they spread out their merchandise which included along with those already mentioned iron swords from Celebes, axes from Billiton, Indian cloth and beads, gold and silver jewellery and small coins from China. For sandalwood and wax the Javanese went to Timor. Spices and sandalwood were carried everywhere within the archipelago, and after 1400 especially to the international port of Malacca. The trade was of course conditioned by the seasonal winds. The western monsoon carried them to the spice islands and the eastern monsoon took them to Sumatra and the ports on the Malacca Strait.

It will be noticed that a marked feature of Indonesian trade was the intertwining of inter-island and international trade. The Indians and the Chinese freely moved into the Indonesian archipelago to collect regional products in exchange for textiles and beads from India and silk, porcelain and small coins from China. These manufactured goods from the continent of Asia were redistributed within the archipelago by the Javanese along with the products of the various islands.

The dominance of the Javanese in the inter-island trade and shipping

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[3] Wolters, 'Studying Srivijaya', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Malayan Branch* (December 1979).

[4] Schrieke B.,*Indonesian Sociological Studies* (The Hague, Bandung, 1955).

was primarily because of Java's location on the main route to the spice islands. The north Javanese port-towns became the natural centres of spice trade for Indonesians as well as for outsiders. The Javanese were excellent navigators and were known for their seafaring exploits in Asian waters even beyond Indonesia. The rise of Majapahit as a political power in the fourteenth century gave them a preponderance over the trade of the archipelago.

Another reason for the great expansion of Javanese trade in the fourteenth and fifteenth century was the Chinese trade with Indonesia and the European demand for spices. Direct Chinese involvement with Indonesian spice trade can be traced to the Yuan/Mongol period (1279-1368). Schrieke draws attention to the Chinese visits to the spice islands in the fourteenth century. It seems that in the face of Malay and Javanese competition, the Chinese gave up direct voyages to the Moluccas and went instead to the port-towns of north Java to collect spices. A firm commercial connection grew up between the Chinese and the north Java ports. Grise, a major port-town of the area was supposed to have been founded by the Chinese. Along with Chinese, Indians, especially Gujarati traders, also visited the north Java ports. Gujaratis were the major suppliers of Indonesian spices to Europe through west Asia. Tome Pires reports that already in the fourteenth century, Gujaratis had been sailing down the west coast of Sumatra to enter the Java Sea via the Sunda Strait. They went as far east as Grise. The partnership between the Gujarati Muslim and the Javanese served the cause of Islamization in the succeeding centuries. Thus it was that after the decline of Srivijaya, Java emerged as the pivot of inter-island trade and also the most important centre of international trade in the archipelago.

Parallel to the rise of Java was the growth of north Sumatra as an independent area of trade. In the closing decades of the thirteenth century, the port kingdoms of north Sumatra were shaking off their allegiance to Srivijaya and establishing direct relations with China. From the records of the Mongol period we learn that the kingdoms of Lan-wu-li (Lamri) and Sumutula sent envoys to the Chinese court. In 1292, Marco Polo noticed that the people of Lamri were calling themselves 'Subjects of the Great Kaan'.

The establishment of direct contact between China and north Sumatra coincided with the coming of Islam to Indonesia. Following the sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258, there took place an eastward expansion of the trading activities of the seafaring Muslims of Arabia and Persia. Gujarat and Malabar, Coromandel and north Sumatra felt the impact of the Islamic wave spreading eastward from west Asia. In 1292, Marco Polo observed that the kingdom of Perlak in north Sumatra had already gone over to Islam. Another north Sumatran state, Samudra, was probably converted to Islam about the same time. A. H. Johns[5] rightly points out that instead of trying to locate the 'specific point of origin' of Islam in the Malay world one has to think in terms of an 'Islamic fall-out around the shores of the Indian Ocean'. It was the Indian Ocean trade which was generating trading communities at certain focal points which became centres of Islamization. Throughout the fourteenth century, the port-kingdom of Pasai (Samudra-Pasai) remained the most important centre of Islamic learning in the entire archipelago. It was from Pasai that Malacca was to take its Islam in early fifteenth century. Pasai was also the biggest centre of Indian trade in western Indonesia before the rise of Malacca.

The emergence of Malacca as a major international port in the Straits region eventually led to a reordering of the political and commercial relations in Indonesia. The founding of Malacca around 1400 by Parameswara, a fugitive Malay prince from Palembang, coincided with the beginning of the expansion of Chinese sea power under the Mings. In a brilliant article on the opening of China's relations with Malacca, Wang Gungwu[6] has shown that China was unaware of Malacca's existence until October 1403 when Haji Ma-ha-mo Chi-ni, who was probably a pepper merchant from Malabar, arrived in China through Siam and met emperor Yung-lo. Wang Gungwu thinks that in all likelihood it was this Muslim pepper merchant who informed Yung-lo about the existence of Malacca and possibly requested the Chinese emperor to send a mission there. Yung-lo acted promptly and ordered his emissary Yin Ching, who was about to lead a voyage to Malabar, to stop by at Malacca. Probably Yin Ching visited Malacca in the middle of 1404 on his way to Malabar. In 1405 on his way back from India he picked up the first Malacca mission to China. On 3 October 1405, the Malacca mission was received by the Chinese emperor along with those from Samudra and Calicut. On 11 November 1405, Malacca was presented with an inscription for the State Mountain composed by emperor Yung-lo himself.

China took the initiative to establish a special relationship with Malacca even before the latter had asked for it. This was the beginning of a diplomatic and commercial relation between China and Malacca which proved to be of vital importance for the survival and growth of the newly established Malayan port-kingdom. For about three decades after this incident the Chinese emperor Yung-lo pursued a vigorous maritime policy by sending out large convoys of ships to southeast Asian and Indian Ocean countries. In course of these expeditions China established contact with about fifty overseas countries. The official purpose of sending out these missions is not clear. It is impossible that China wanted to impress countries across the seas by a demonstration of her naval power. Two other points emerge from Wang Gungwu's writings on the subject. First, China was anxious to control and curb private trading across the seas by Chinese merchants and shipowners as all foreign trade was supposed to be under the auspices of the government. Secondly, it is clear from the several moves taken by Yung-lo that he wanted to attract the pepper traders of the Indian Ocean toward China.

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[5] Johns, A.H., 'Islam in Southeast Asia: Reflections and New Directions' in Geertz (ed.) *Islam Observed* (London, 1968).

[6] Wang Gungwu, 'Opening of Relations between China and Malacca: 1403-1405', in Bastin and Roolvink (eds.) *Malayan and Indonesian Studies* (Oxford, 1963).

After 1433, Chinese naval expeditions were abruptly discontinued. Generally speaking from this time onward the Chinese ships came as far west as Malacca. From the west the Indian traders came as far east as Malacca and did not usually sail beyond this point. By the middle of the fifteenth century Malacca had become the meeting point of traders from the East and the West, overshadowing Calicut.

It should be observed that notwithstanding the claims of Nagarakertagáma the authority of Java was not solidly established over the western end of Indonesia. When the fall of Srivijaya left a void Java had to contend in this region with the expanding power of Siam. Ayuthia was founded around 1350 and by the end of the fourteenth century Siam's authority extended as far as southern Malaya. Malacca itself was within the political orbit of Siam. It is an interesting coincidence that shortly after the founding of Malacca by Parameswara, Haji Ma-ha-mo Chi-ni (whom Syed Naguib Al-Attas identifies as a Persian Jilani merchant) began to persuade the Ming emperor Yung-lo to give diplomatic backing to Malacca and in October 1405, Parameswara, the ruler of Malacca, was given the title of a king by the Chinese emperor.

Timely intervention by China warded off the impending overlordship of Siam over the Strait of Malacca. It enabled the Indian Ocean merchants to find in Malacca a more suitable place for trading with the Chinese outside the Siamese zone. In responding to Haji Ma-ha-mo Chi-ni's request for extending support to Malacca,China showed its eagerness to come to terms with the Indian Ocean trade which was expanding towards the east. The Strait of Malacca was once again cleared for East-West traffic. The linking up of Indian Ocean trade with China through western Indonesia took place despite the Majapahit presence in Java. In the first half of the fifteenth century a new commercial pattern wove itself around Malacca changing as a consequence the status of Java.

During this period the inter-island trade of Indonesia became more and more oriented to Malacca. The emporium was regularly kept supplied with foodstuff and those products of the archipelago which were needed for international trade. Malacca increasingly dominated the trans-Asian trade of the region relegating north Java and north Sumatra to a secondary position. As Malacca's trade with the spice islands was carried on through the mediation of the north Javanese port-towns, these cities became prosperous. Thus Grise, which was already a terminal port for the Gujaratis in the fourteenth century, became important once again and its trade grew along with the growth of Malacca after 1400. By about 1450, the Chinese turned away from north Java and concentrated more and more on Malacca. About the same time the Gujaratis too withdrew from north Java and built up their trade with Malacca in a big way. Schrieke thinks that the turning away of China from a direct participation in the Indian Ocean trade after 1433 left the field open for the Gujaratis. Very soon the Gujaratis emerged as the major carriers of Indonesian spices and pepper to Europe via India and west Asia.

Schrieke attaches great importance to the diversion of the trade route through Egypt after the fall of Baghdad in 1258. He thinks that the rise of Cambay as a major international port should be correlated tothis shift in the route of the spice trade. In his opinion spices and pepper henceforth began to be carried from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean through Egypt making Cambay and Aden important transhipment points. On the eastern side the Gujaratis established contact with the spice ports of north Java in the fourteenth century. They were also in close touch with north Sumatra. When in the middle of the fifteenth century the Gujaratis turned to Malacca after having pulled out of north Java, they still retained their old connection with north Sumatra.

In the second half of the fifteenth century the Cambay–Malacca trade was the axis of eastern Indian Ocean trade, which has been elaborately described by Tome Pires. At about the same time both Hindu and Muslim Tamils began trading between the Coromandel coast and Malacca. Bengal traders and Dabhol merchants formed yet another group of Indian traders who had direct links with Malacca.

The Gujaratis were undoubtedly the most dominant among Indian trading groups in Malacca. About one thousand Gujaratis lived in Malacca and three to four thousands sailed regularly between Cambay and Indonesia. Their commercial representatives were stationed in all the major ports of southeast Asia. Ships sailing regularly from Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal to Malacca also carried merchants from other regions. Thus Turk, Armenian, Arab, Persian and Abyssinian merchants joined the annual Gujarati convoy sailing out to Malacca. Men went from Dabhol on the west coast of India to Bengal and joined with the merchants going to Malacca from the Bengal ports. The Malabars joined the Tamils who sailed across the Bay of Bengal from Pulicat. Indian Ocean traders brought to Malacca coloured woollen cloths and glassware from the Mediterranean, west Asian merchandise like opium, indigo, silver and seed-pearls, along with textiles and cornelians from India. At Malacca, Indians and west Asians met traders from all over southeast Asia, China and the Ryu Kyu islands. European travellers at the beginning of the sixteenth century never failed to be impressed by the cosmopolitan character of the congregation of merchants at Malacca. Tome Pires observed that eighty-four distinct languages were spoken in the city.

It is all to often assumed that the Indonesian marts were passive transhipment points for the so-called East-West trade. Indians and west Asians no doubt met the Chinese at Malacca as they also met traders from all over southeast Asia. The question is what was the major driving force behind Indian trade with Malacca? Was it primarily the attraction of Chinese goods or did Indonesian products matter? A look at the pattern of exchange at Malacca will show that side by side with products from China the regional products figured largely in the transactions of Malacca. Chinese, Indians and west Asians bought up large quantities of pepper, spices and white sandalwood. In fact the Chinese were the biggest buyers of pepper before the coming of Europeans to Indonesia. Malacca was the biggest spice market in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It also disposed of a great deal of pepper. It is worth noting that Pires omits to mention pepper in the list of Gujarati purchases from Malacca. Possibly the Gujaratis picked it up directly from north Sumatra and Kedah. It was mainly through the Gujaratis that Europe was kept supplied with Indonesian spices and pepper.

Indians went to Malacca not only to buy spices but also to sell cloth. One of the outstanding features of Indonesian trade of this time was the universal demand for Indian textiles. Gujarati, Coromandel and Bengal cloth was sold in substantial quantities not only in Indonesia but in other southeast Asian countries as well. Bengal cloth was sold as far as the Ryu Kyu islands. As for the India–China trade, while Indians bought silk and porcelain from China, Chinese were not interested in Indian textiles. At Malacca they collected coloured woollen cloth and camlets brought in by west Asian merchants and cornelian beads from Cambay. Later the Chinese trading within Indonesia may have dealt in Indian cloth, but only as a medium of exchange for spice, pepper and sandalwood and not for sending it to China. Malacca was the biggest market for Indian textiles in the East, but it was geared to southeast Asia rather than to China. Indeed Indian Ocean trade would have been revolutionized if at any time China itself became a market for Indian cloth.

It is important to note that we do not have any written evidence from Indian Ocean traders. Nor do we have any Malay or Javanese sources for this period. Information gleaned from Chinese notices of Malacca in the fifteenth century is important but inadequate. Most of what we know of Malacca's trade is gleaned from early sixteenth century Portuguese sources.

Before the Portuguese came, the city of Malacca was ruled by an urban monarchy which derived its income primarily from the trade of the port-town. The rulers embraced Islam sometime in the first half of the fifteenth century establishing close connections with Indian Ocean traders. Wilkinson[7] describes the Malay ruling class as living 'rather parasitically on a community of alien traders'. Business was carried on in small raised booths or stalls within the stockaded bazar where the traders kept their stores, money and provisions. Every incoming ship was stopped at a barrier drawn across the mouth of the river for collection of customs duty. Thereafter the ships could enter the river and sell freely to the merchants.

The sultan of Malacca controlled the trade through the mediation of the *shahbandars*, who were superintendents of trade in charge of foreign merchants and were 'of the same nation as the merchants'. There were four *shabandars* in Malacca, one for the Gujaratis; one for the Coromandel merchants, the Bengalis, the Peguans and the traders of Pasai; one for the Javanese, Moluccans, Bandanese, traders from Palembang and the Lucoes (the Philippines); and one for the Chinese, Lequeos (Japanese from Ryu Kyu) and traders from Champa. The allocation of work among the four *shahbandars* shows that the Malaccan sultans were aware of the crucial importance of the port-town as the meeting place of traders from the East and the West. It also shows their familiarity with the major trading zones of maritime Asia.

The Malaccan sultan derived a good income from the dues, presents and weighing charges paid by foreign merchants. Senior officials also raised money from the women street-sellers. Besides, the sultan had fiscal jurisdiction over landed estates. Houses or gardens could not be sold without a licence from the king or the *bendahara* (prime minister). The king also derived an income from private investment in trade and shipping.

The Malay ruling class with its interlocking interests in trade and land occupied the top position in Malaccan society. Civil and military officials were mostly drawn from a nobility which lived a life of ease. They had large garden-houses beyond the precincts of the city and houses within the city for trading purposes. Foreign merchants were almost equal in social status but inferior in political power. Many of them were wholesale merchants of considerable wealth. They lived in little settlements of their own administered by their own *shahbandars*. The outer township consisted of two quarters—Upeh and Ilir. In Upeh, Indian merchants lived along with the Chinese and the Javanese from Tuban, Japara, Sunda and Palembang. The Javanese were under the authority of Utimutirajah, a powerful and influential chief. The Javanese from Grise lived in Ilir under their chief Tuan-ku-Laskar. At the beginning of sixteenth century, when Malacca's trade was at its peak, the Javanese presence in the port-city was quite impressive. Their crucial role derived from the fact that they provided Malacca with its basic food-supply of rice. Moreover their chief, Utimutirajah was among the wealthiest and most powerful merchants of the city, on par with the continental merchants. In succeeding centuries the Javanese were hardly able to hold on to this position of competitive equality with other Asian merchants.

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[7] Wilkinson, R.J., 'The Fall of Malacca' and 'The Malacca Sultanate in *JRASMB*, 13(2) (1935).

The ruling class and the merchant-princes of Malacca formed, what Van Leur calls, the passive element of Indonesian trade. The vast body of pedlars made up the active elements. The merchant-princes and the senior officials involved in trade were primarily financiers, while the pedlars, some of whom were slaves, undertook long-distance journeys with commenda money and merchandise. They also acted as street vendors or ratail distributors of goods. Van Leur has over-stressed the polarization between the merchant-prince and the pedlar in a typical Indonesian port-town. One can surely identify a middle layer composed of the *nakhodas*, the moderately wealthy small junk-owners, who were mostly Javanese, and business agents of the small level, who stood between the princes and the pedlars. They were the major carriers and distributors of Indonesian and foreign goods.

In 1511, the Portuguese took Malacca by force. The Gujaratis persuaded Sultan Mahmud (1488-1528) to try to defend the city. They helped with money and 600 Turkish mercenaries. The Malaccan sultan appealed to China for help, but the Chinese were not in a position to do anything effective. At the same time there were divisions within the Malayan camp between the sultan of Malacca and his son. Among the foreign merchants, while the Chinese and the Tamils were friendly with the Portuguese, the Javanese kept aloof. In the end the Malays could not stand up to the superior long-range artillery of the Portuguese. Malacca's fall in 1511 showed up the defencelessness of an Indian Ocean port-town in the face of a strong naval attack. The so-called Muslim trading network had not generated any sense of Islamic solidarity.

The Portuguese Presence in Indonesia

The Portuguese ruled Malacca until 1641 when the city fell to the Dutch. J. C. Van Leur's general conclusion that Asian maritime trade was not significantly altered by Portuguese intervention has provoked much discussion. Van Leur mainly relied on printed Dutch accounts and records and followed the analytical approach of W. H. Moreland. It ought to be borne in mind that while he was writing, he was unaware of the *Suma Oriental* of Tome Pires, as was Bernard Schrieke. Both of them, however, were familiar with Ramusio's *Navigationi* which included portions of the Pires report. Later writers like C. R. Boxer, I.A. Macgregor and M. A. P. Meilink-Roelofsz have fully utilized the Portuguese material, both published and unpublished, to build a picture of Indonesian trade in the Portuguese period. Similarly M. N. Pearson has given an excellent coverage of the Portuguese interaction with the Gujaratis in the west coast of India on the basis of Portuguese records. By putting these writings together one is able to form a more balanced view of the general effects of Portuguese involvement in Indonesian trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Malacca was a cosmopolitan city accustomed to welcoming foreign trading groups. The Portuguese, however, did not come as peaceful traders. They gate-crashed into the Malay-Indonesian world through the dramatic conquest of Malacca in 1511. Because Malacca was the nerve-centre of Indonesian trade, the Portuguese conquest had great disruptive effects. Unlike the Chola raid on Srivijaya in the eleventh century the Portuguese attack was not a passing episode. Albuquerque had been inspired by the grand design of ruining Muslim spice trade in the Indian ocean. The Portuguese had come to stay in Malacca and the area around it for more than a century.

The immediate effect of the capture of Malacca by the Portuguese was an exodus of the Muslim élite. Sultan Mahmud escaped to Bintan and continued to harass the Portuguese from there. He finally settled in Johor from where he and his successors carried on the dynastic policy of hostility toward Portuguese Malacca. This enmity lasted for over a century during which period Johor made several attacks on Malacca and in its turn suffered many assaults by the Portuguese. Part of Malacca's trade was shifted to Johor which became a minor international emporium in the troubled Strait of Malacca.

As Portuguese policy was openly hostile to the Muslims they began to leave the city in large numbers. One group of Indian Ocean traders shifted to Pasai in north Sumatra and from there on to Acheh around 1520. Acheh soon emerged as the chief centre of Muslim religious activity in western Indonesia. It become the rallying point of Gujarati Muslims thrown out of Malacca. Another group of Muslim traders went to Bantam in west Java. A third group left for Brunei in north Borneo while many Malay traders transferred their activities to Macassar in south Celebes.

The second result was a dispersal of trade along alternative sea-routes. On the one hand the restrictive policy of the Portuguese made Asian traders seek alternative ports. On the other hand a three-cornered struggle began in the Straits region between Acheh, Johor and Malacca which made the area unsafe for trade and travel. For considerations of trade the Portuguese soon gave up their anti-Muslim policy and relaxed their regulations with a view to re-attract Asian merchants to Malacca. The Tamils seemed to have continued their trading link with the city but, generally speaking, the Muslims and the Chinese spread out to other ports. A diversion of trade took place along the west coast of Sumatra. Traders from the West preferred to follow this route to enter the Java Sea via the Sunda Strait. Acheh at the northwestern tip of Sumatra and Bantam in west Java gained from this shift in trade route. Another route revitalized by shifting trade was the one which ran across Siamese territory via Mergui and Tenasserim. Patani on the east coast of the Malayan peninsula became the terminal point of Chinese trade. The unity of the Malayan trading world was breaking down. Instead of one big international port geared to the high trade of Asia there was now a number of international ports.

The Portuguese were responsible for the opening of a direct sea route to Europe. However, they failed to realize their two major objectives, namely to establish a monopoly in pepper and spice trade and to destroy the Muslim supply route to Europe through west Asia. Strong Asian competition prevented the Portuguese from enjoying any monopoly in pepper either in Malabar or in western Indonesia. The Portuguese intervention at first disrupted for a short period the old Javanese and Malay trade with the region. The Javanese fleet was partly destroyed through direct encounter with the Portuguese in the Straits of Malacca soon after 1511. Yet the vitality of Javanese inter-island trade was such that it soon revived and recaptured much of the lost ground. The Portuguese settlements in Ternate, Tidore, Amboina, Solor and Timor did not, in the long run, enable them to acquire a dominant position in the spice and sandalwood trade of eastern Indonesia. It should be remembered that the Portuguese failure to secure footholds in Bantam, Acheh and Aden gave the Asians a chance to build up an alternative supply line to Europe outside the Portuguese orbit. Indonesian spice and pepper could be shipped to the Mediterranean via Aden by the Achinese in collaboration with the Gujaratis. C. R. Boxer has shown how this Achinese-Gujarati trade eluded Portuguese patrolling ships and sent to Europe larger quantities of pepper and spices via Aden than was carried via the Cape route.

Thus it is clear that the Portuguese eventually failed to establish a monolithic control over the trade of the Indonesian archipelago. The Portuguese pass system to control Asian shipping was ineffective except within a limited range of their fortified posts. The real explanation of this phenomenon is to be sought in the nature of Portuguese trading and in the limitations under which they carried on their operations.

Much has been written on the corruption of the Portuguese captains in charge of the fortified stations. However, this should not be studied in isolation. It ought to be placed within the total frame of activities of the Portuguese. Considering the difficulties under which the Portuguese worked it is not surprising that they maintained themselves somewhat precariously at a few fortified settlements situated far apart from one another. Portugal in the sixteenth century had a population of about one and a half million. Of this not more than 10,000 came out to the East to manage an overstretched empire. The number of Portuguese in Malacca never exceeded 600 and an average for over fourteen months was only 200. The official trade was the personal business of the king of Portugal run on medieval lines.

Portuguese officials in Malacca were servants of the king and not of any trading company. But it should be borne in mind that the king of Portugal had very little effective control over his servants in the East. A gentleman, a *fidalgo*, a knight, a judge or a doctor of law could not be arrested. Besides the king had to depend on the *fidalgo's* military experience and private generosity. The Portuguese government in Malacca often failed to pay its servants their legitimate dues. The government encouraged its servants to marry locally with the expectation that 'these men would settle down and live off the food of the country and yet remain loyal'. This policy however did not work according to expectation. In 1525 there were 38 married persons in Malacca; by 1626 there were not more than 114. When a Portuguese government servant was not paid regularly he could sell his right to salary or look for an influential patron. He could also sell his weapons and turn an adventurer.

The fact that the Portuguese were poorly supplied with men and money from their homeland made it imperative that they make the best use of local resources. They soon discovered that trading within Asia was more profitable than trading with Europe. In the second half of the sixteenth century one notices a significant change in Portuguese trade in Asia. Portuguese private traders, mostly Luso-Indians, took over a large part of the inter-Asian trade. The old spirit of hostility was replaced by an attempt to build up partnership and collaboration with Asian merchants. Even Portuguese captains borrowed money from Asian bankers and indulged in private trade through Asian agents. M. N. Pearson has demonstrated to what extent the Portuguese relied on Gujaratis for money and service. Similarly the investigations of M.A.P.Meilink-Roelofsz have proved beyond doubt that the Portuguese trade within the archipelago was often in co-operation with the Malays, the Javanese and the Chinese.

One effect of Portuguese trade along the coastal littoral of Asia was that different zones of Asian sea trade became interconnected. Thus before the coming of the Portuguese the Gujaratis travelled as far east as Malacca and usually did not sail beyond that point. After the Portuguese settled in Indonesia, Gujaratis re-entered the archipelago and freely visited the major port-towns. In fact by boarding Portuguese ships the Gujaratis went as far as Japan. Just as the Goa–Japan voyage initiated by the Portuguese connected the Arabian Sea with the Far East, similarly the Macao–Timor trade also opened by the Portuguese established a north–south trading line across Indonesia.

Compared to the company trade of the English and the Dutch in the seventeenth century, the Portuguese Asian trade in the sixteenth century was less centralized. The government in Goa could hardly exercise any effective check on the far flung trade of the Portuguese in Asia. The

Portuguese captains and the freedom-loving *fidalgos* carried on almost unrestrained private trade in different parts of Asia. The trade of the vast body of Luso-Indonesians and their Eurasian counterparts in Indonesia was perceived as 'Portuguese trade' although it was not a unified network controlled by a central authority. The dispersed and decentralized character of Portuguese trade accounts for the ubiquity of the Portuguese in maritime Asia. The Portuguese seemed to be present everywhere in coastal Asia not because they had more resources of their own but because they could freely intermingle with the Asians. The freedom of the private Portuguese person to engage in trade in a manner he liked best was unrestrained by any board of directors in Europe.

The looseness of the trading structure of the Portuguese in Asia turned out to be a source of strength rather than of weakness. It left them greater room for accommodation with Asian trade. In the process the Portuguese became more Asianized than the other European groups which followed them. C.R. Boxer is right in concluding that the Portuguese impact on trade and society in Asia was far out of proportion to their actual military strength. For over two centuries Portuguese remained the lingua franca of maritime Asia.

Portuguese impact on Indonesian society is best seen in a crystallized form in Malacca which was the first typical European-style port-town grafted on the soil of Malaya. In the wooded suburbs of Malacca a number of Christian churches were built with a fairly large Christian population to support them. Between 1613 and 1641, the Christian population of Malacca rose from 7,400 to 20,000. In the enclosed part of the city had sprung up the new administrative buildings, five churches, two hospitals and one Jesuit college. The cluster of European-style buildings was protected by an imposing fortress, 240 feet high. Portuguese Malacca played a crucial role not merely as a trading mart but also as a centre of diffusion of a new hybrid culture.

With Malacca as the base of operation, the Portuguese spread out all over the archipelago. The destruction of the Java fleet (1511-13) left the Portuguese free to sail unchallenged to the Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda Islands. The naval superiority of the Portuguese did not actually enable them to dominate Indonesian trade. Boxer follows Van Leur in saying that the Portuguese shipping was merely one more thread in the existing Malay-Indonesian inter-port trade. This interweaving of Portuguese trading with the long-established pattern of Indonesian trade took place despite the unrelenting efforts of Acheh, Johor and Japara to dislodge the Portuguese from Malacca.

Acute rivalry among the Indonesian kingdoms made it possible for the Portuguese to hold on to Malacca even after the English and the Dutch had arrived around 1600. In eastern Indonesia, the Portuguese were easily overpowered by the Dutch notwithstanding the help they received from the Spanish operating from Manila. That the Portuguese could continue to offer some competition to the Dutch long after their naval defeat is a measure of their effective penetration of Indonesian trade.

The extent of Portuguese trading in Indonesia has been fully sketched in Meilink-Roelofsz's *Asian Trade and European Influence*, which sets out to examine Van Leur's conclusions about the Portuguese impact on Asian trade. One finds the Portuguese fully involved in the pepper trade of western Indonesia and the spice trade of the Moluccas, the Bandas and Amboina. They entered the tin trade of Malaya and took over much of the sandalwood trade of Timor. Portuguese trading in Indonesia had close connections with Indian trade on the one hand and with the Manila trade on the other. Manila was the centre of a newly emerging trading complex : the Macao–Manila–Nagasaki trade. The Spanish trade connecting Acapulco and Manila was a major source of silver needed for the Asian trade.

In order to buy up pepper and spices the Portuguese needed to have a good supply of Indian cloth which was the most important medium of exchange in Indonesia. The age-old textile trade between India and Indonesia was partly taken over by the Portuguese, especially between Malacca and Bengal They also carried spices to Cambay sometimes in collaboration with the Gujaratis. The Indians themselves seized this opportunity to re-enter the Indonesian area in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The Tamils were already firmly entrenched in Malacca and they continued their trade right down to the end of the Portuguese period. Tome Pires refers to one Surya Deva (Curia Deva), a merchant from the Coromandel, who sent ships to the Moluccas. Some ports of western Indonesia like Kedah, Acheh, Tiku, Priaman and Baros had been accessible to the Gujaratis for quite a long time. In the Portuguese period they began trading with Johor, Jambi, Bantam, the port-towns of north Java and the spice islands. There was a Gujarati settlement in Banda Island. In early seventeenth century the governor of Japara was a Gujarati. During the same period the Chinese traders became active in Patani, Johor, Jambi, Acheh, west coast of Sumatra, Bantam, Grise, Timor and Macassar. Their contact with the spice islands was short-lived as they preferred to do business in spices in the north Java towns.

The return of the continental merchants—the Indians and the Chinese —to the Indonesian archipelago was an important consequence of Portuguese penetration of the region. The Javanese dominance in the inter-island trade was faced with a new threat. However, in the second half of the sixteenth century there was a resurgence of indigenous trade and the Javanese were found to be quite active in the inter-port trade until in the succeeding period they came up against the combined opposition of the Dutch and the kingdom of Mátaram.

Portuguese participation in the pepper and spice trade caused a rise in prices and led to increased production of these commodities. Both pepper and spice production spread out into new areas. The influx of foreign merchants had the effect of alerting the coastal potentates and making them aware of the great value of the local products. A scramble for pepper and spices had begun. Many of the coastal kingdoms began to extend their territories with a view to reach out to the areas of production and the ports acting as outlets for these products. Acheh threw up a little empire along the east and west coasts of Sumatra. Ternate and Tidore and later Macassar extended their respective areas of control. The same process operated in north Java.

The Portuguese attack on Malacca in 1511 coincided with the spread of Islam along the coasts of Indonesia. One may not agree with Schrieke that the Portuguese presence sparked off a race between Christianity and Islam in Indonesia, but undoubtedly there was a quickening of zeal for Islam during this period in the coastal regions. But the opposition between Christianity and Islam should not be overstressed because there was no unity among Muslims and no desire to combine against Christian powers. The sultanates were as bitterly opposed to one another as they were to the Portuguese in Malacca. Religion may not have been as important a factor as it appears on the surface. The Portuguese, however, conditioned the political atmosphere in a different way. They were the major importers of firearms in this area. Individual Portuguese entered the services of southeast Asian kingdoms and helped in spreading the knowledge of firearms. In this sense the Portuguese were partly responsible for aggravating the intense political rivalry within the Indonesian archipelago.

The Seventeenth Century

For many historians of Indonesia the seventeenth century opens with the Anglo-Dutch assault on the Portuguese and Spanish positions in the East accompanied by Anglo-Dutch rivalry to dominate the spice trade. These episodes acquire importance not only from the point of view of European expansion in Asia. Even from an Indonesian point of view the dominant European power in the region often provide us with a convenient focus. Historians have vainly looked for a focus in Indonesia. In the period of European interference one can look at the interaction of Indonesian states with the major European power as a convenient central theme. One can begin by asking the question : where do Indonesian states stand in relation to the Dutch East India Company? It is possible to write a meaningful account of Indonesian trade and politics in the seventeenth century in terms of this question. Yet it seems imperative at this point to plead for an alternative viewpoint. European activities should be seen within the dynamics of Indonesian trade. Furthermore the interrelation of Indonesian states should be given the weightage it deserves. It is essential to grasp that the evolution of trade and politics in Indonesia has a rhythm of its own. There is a constant tendency to reach a structural balance in the archipelago between the East and the West. What D.G.E. Hall calls the 'ding-dong battle between Sumatra and east Java' reflects the perennial see-saw, the everlasting fluidity of a shifting balance which paradoxically holds the archipelago together. When Srivijaya gave some sort of unity and cohesion to western Indonesia it was attacked by east Java which had friendly ties with the Cholas. Then the focus shifted to Java which became the core of the Majapahit empire. The sultanate of Malacca (1400-1511) once again recaptured for western Indonesia the position it had once enjoyed under Srivijaya. The Portuguese conquest in 1511 eventually destroyed the unity of the Malay empire. For a time the unicentred pattern of Indonesian trade was replaced by a multicentred arrangement. This situation continued until the Dutch made Batavia the nucleus of a Java-based commercial network which sought to encompass the entire archipelago. Historians have tried to examine the extent of European influence on Indonesian trade. It is fruitful to explore to what extent the outsiders were forced to come to terms with the situation in the archipelago. The compulsions of the trading environment in Indonesia obviously set limits to the course of action to be adopted by the Europeans.

North Sumatra

The trade of north Sumatra revived soon after the capture of Malacca by the Portuguese at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Indian Ocean traders, especially Gujaratis, visited Bandar Acheh in large numbers. One reason why the Portuguese failed to take over the pepper trade of western Indonesia was because the Gujaratis collaborated with the Achinese to build up an alternative supply line between north Sumatra and the Red Sea region. It has been estimated that in 1530 about 30,000 pounds of spices were annually shipped around the Cape while about 480,000 pounds were transported via the overland route. Again in 1585, while the Portuguese were carrying 1,200,000 pounds around the Cape route about 4,000,000 pounds of pepper and spices were exported via the Red Sea.

The maritime kingdom of Acheh reached a high point during the reign of Sultan Ala-al-din Riyat Shah al-kahar (1537-1571) when it had emerged as the most powerful state in the Malay world having connections with Turkey and India. Acheh's further growth was impeded by continuous friction with the Portuguese in Malacca and the rival Malay kingdom of Johor. Under Iskandar Muda (1607-1636) Acheh became the strongest power in western Indonesia and was able to counter all attempts by Europeans to control the pepper trade of Sumatra. Acheh emerged in the seventeenth century as one of the major international ports of Indonesia. A typical coastal city of Indonesia, Acheh has been described as a city 'built in a wood'. The French traveller Beaulieu thought it was more like a village than a city, an open space without walls or even a ditch around it. It was a populous city, big enough to enable Iskandar Muda to raise an army of 40,000 men. The royal palace, made of stone and 'built in the Indian style' dominated the town. The great mosque was another attraction. There was a market at the heart of the city and another at the northern end. Foreign traders came to Acheh from the Indian Ocean region as well as from southeast Asia and China. They lived in separate quarters along the Acheh river. Europeans too were allotted a stretch of land near the river. Bandar Acheh Dar es Salam, as it was called by foreigners, was the central metropolis of the kingdom of Acheh, which in early seventeenth century, stretched 1100 miles along the east and west coast of Sumatra. The capital city was the nucleus of a trading network connecting it with smaller ports like Pasai, Pedir and Deli on the east and Tiku, Priaman, Padang and Selebar on the west coast.

The coming of the English and the Dutch around 1600 followed by the French and the Danes changed the situation. Iskandar Muda, tried and succeeded up to a point to utilize the presence of the new Europeans for his own ends. The sultan who was a big trader himself was driven primarily by political motives. He sought help from the English and the Dutch to oust the Portuguese from Malacca. He also wanted to establish Acheh as the supreme Malay power at the expense of Johor. For a brief period he dominated the scene with his powerful fleet. He played off the English against the Dutch and kept the Gujaratis under control. Foreign traders, including Europeans, who dealt in Indian textiles and Sumatran pepper had to accept the sultan's terms.

In the sixteenth century Gujaratis imported Indian cloth of all kinds to Sumatra and exchanged it for pepper. For reasons as yet unexplained, Gujaratis fell out of favour with Iskandar Muda. Owing to political disturbance in India there was a break in Gujarati supply of textiles to Acheh in 1615. At this point the English entered the India-Sumatra trade and began to supply the Acheh market with a variety of Indian cloths. Pepper trade had already veered round to the west coast of Sumatra and the places to go to were Tiku, Priaman and Passaman. The sultan, however, tried to pull away the trade of the west coast and keep it confined to the capital city of Acheh so that his officials could keep an eye on the foreign traders. The English and the Dutch were given short-term permits to trade in the west coast. But the king's men kept buying up pepper and obstructing the business of the foreign traders. It is interesting that some Gujaratis of Acheh acted as collaborators with the king in this matter.

Iskandar Muda died in 1636, without having attained his objectives, and Malacca was finally taken from the Portuguese by the Dutch in 1641 with the help of Johor. In the second half of the seventeenth century Acheh's importance declined. The Dutch made a bid to capture the pepper trade of Sumatra and the tin trade of Malaya, but they failed owing to strong competition from Indians, Malays, Chinese, English and Portuguese.

Bantam

Like Acheh, Bantam had become an important international port in the sixteenth century. As the Malacca Strait was disturbed by intermittent fighting between the Indonesian states and the Portuguese and between the Malay powers themselves, Indian Ocean traders began to use an older route along the west coast of Sumatra. Located on the Sunda Strait, Bantam gained by the new shift in the trade route. The port, however, derived its importance from its connection with Chinese traders. China customarily absorbed a great deal of Indonesian pepper. After the disruption of the Malacca trade in 1511, the Chinese spread out to a number of places in search of pepper: they visited Patani in Malaya, Acheh and Jambi in Sumatra and Bantam in west Java. In the seventeenth century Bantam was a major source of pepper not only for the Chinese but also for Indians, west Asians and Europeans. The Dutch, when they first arrived in Indonesia, went directly to Bantam because it lay outside the Portuguese zone.

J. C. Van Leur chose Bantam as a classic example of an Indonesian port-town dominated by merchant-princes and served by slaves and pedlars. It was a well-built city surrounded by brick walls, 'very warlike built, with flankers and turrets scowering every way'. A river ran through the town and at high tide both galleys and junks carrying heavy cargo could go up to the middle of the city. As in the case of Acheh, foreign traders lived in settlements of their own. There were three markets kept up every day, the biggest being held in the vast field lying east of the city gates.

Although not as powerful as Acheh, the sultanate of Bantam owned a fairly large mercantile marine which was engaged in inter-island as well as international trade. The coming of the English and the Dutch, followed by the French and the Danes at Bantam as buyers of pepper demonstrated the great demand for the commodity in the world market. The rulers of Bantam encouraged its cultivation in the hinterland. The state expanded in the direction of Palembang to get access to the pepper producing regions of Tulang Bawang (Lampong in south Sumatra) and the pepper ports in west Sumatra up to Selebar. Except Jambi all coastal areas of Sumatra, not incorporated within the empire of Acheh, came under Bantam's hegemony.

Although the *shahbandar* of Bantam in early seventeenth century was a Coromandel merchant from India, the Chinese were the major trading group in the city. At least three to four junks arrived every year from China bringing silk, porcelain and cash. These Chinese traders worked in close collaboration with the resident Chinese who were deeply involved in the internal trade of the archipelago. The slaves and pedlars acting for the 'wholesale merchants' of Bantam kept the port supplied with spices from the Moluccas and the Bandas. Until the establishment of Dutch monopoly over the spice trade Bantam remained a clearing house for cloves, nutmeg and mace. On their return journey the Chinese took pepper, spices, sandalwood and European money. The Chinese were interested in picking up European coins and more of them arrived in the seventeenth century when the Dutch and the English Companies began trading with Bantam. The Gujaratis and other Indian Ocean merchants bought pepper, spices and Chinese goods from the Bantam market. For this reason a substantial quantity of Gujarati and Coromandel cloth was imported to Bantam. Apart from Indians, Malays, Javanese, Portuguese, English and Dutch also imported Indian textiles. Much of this cloth came in through Malacca as it had come in the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century the English and the Dutch opened direct trade lines connecting Surat and the Coromandel coast with Acheh and Bantam.

Bantam imported a lot of rice and salt from other ports of Java. At the same time it was a food market for the Portuguese from Malacca. When the Dutch blockade held up the flow of rice into the port, some of the neighbouring land used for growing pepper was given over to rice cultivation. Bantam was also known for sugar production though the quantity produced in the seventeenth century must have been small. The *shahbandar* of Bantam was hostile to the Dutch because the latter tried to establish monopolistic control over the pepper trade of the port. The local authorities were anxious to protect its customary trade with the Chinese. There was a steady flow of Chinese immigrants into the city. The resident Chinese were influential in politics and trade and they co-operated with the government in opposing the Dutch. Of course there were some Chinese middlemen who worked for the Europeans. It was the Anglo-Dutch rivalry which ultimately made it possible for the sultanate of Bantam to preserve its independence until 1684. It is true that after the Amboina Incident (1623) the English could no longer oppose the Dutch politically, but they continued to compete with the Dutch in the pepper and spice trade as well as in the cloth trade from India. The English presence in Bantam right up to 1682 enabled the sultanate to deal more effectively with the Dutch for the greater part of the seventeenth century. As the Dutch became well-established in Batavia, they overpowered Bantam taking advantage of its internal dissensions. Eventually Dutch efforts to pull away the Chinese trade to Batavia was successful. War with the Dutch badly hurt the trade of Bantam. The port declined rapidly and the pepper production fell substantially in the eighteenth century.

Jambi and Palembang

Jambi and Palembang were the eastern outlets for pepper grown in the Minangkabau highlands of Sumatra. The Chinese came every year to buy pepper from Jambi. In the sixteenth century the Portuguese began to exchange Indian cloth for Jambi pepper. Beside the Chinese and the Portuguese, the Javanese too visited Jambi. In the early decades of the seventeenth century, the restrictive policy of the sultanates of Acheh and Bantam combined with rising prices made the English and the Dutch look for pepper in Jambi. Factories were set up by the Dutch and the English as early as 1615. The urgency to explore the Jambi market more intensively was felt in the 1620's when the Achinese empire expanding along the coasts of Sumatra threatened to overrun Jambi. The Achinese attack did not materialize and competition among European powers prevented the establishment of full control over the region by any one nation.

Like all other coastal principalities of Indonesia, Jambi too felt the impulse to expand to gain better control over pepper production and transportation. It fought with Palembang to attain supremacy over the pepper region in Tumbesi. In 1630 Jambi, Indragiri and Johor began to contend for control over shipping on the border river Tungkal. It was the competition among Europeans which permitted a minor port like Jambi to function as an important centre of international pepper trade for quite some time. The fall of Portuguese Malacca in 1641 opened the way for Dutch political dominance over western Indonesia. A 'contract' was made with Palembang in 1641 and another with Jambi in 1643 to eliminate the Chinese buyer, settle for a fixed price of pepper and restrict Jambinese shipping. The independence of Jambi was at an end.

Johor

The Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511 forced Sultan Mahmud (1488-1528) to leave the city and settle in Bintang, southeast of Singapore. The kingdom of Johor grew out of the Malaccan government in exile. Throughout the sixteenth century Johor fought intermittently with the Portuguese and the Achinese. Its capital had to be shifted around because of periodic attacks by its enemies. Yet historians of Johor are impressed by the resilience of the Malay kingdom in the face of crises, its power of recovery after a seemingly disastrous defeat and its ability to attract trade in the midst of political turmoil.

One of Johor's economic aims was to obstruct the trade of Portuguese Malacca. Asian traders were attracted to Johor because of the low duties and good prices offered by the sultan. The Portuguese could not prevent the growth of Johor as an alternative trading centre in the Straits of

Malacca. Occasionally even the Portuguese governors of Malacca would be tempted to trade with Johor. In the sixteenth century Indian Ocean traders could not come to Johor owing to troubled conditions in the Malacca Strait. They preferred to go to Acheh and Bantam. Johor naturally turned to the east and tried to attract Chinese and Javanese merchants. Pepper from Kampar and Indragiri in Sumatra used to be exported through Johor. Cloves, nutmeg and mace were supplied to Johor from the Bandas. At the beginning of the seventeenth century Johor's position improved with the coming of the Dutch. Indian Ocean traders were able to establish contact with this Malay emporium. By 1605 one finds the Gujaratis bringing cloth to Batu Sawar. Yet before 1641 Johor was unable to play a major role in the international trade of Indonesia. In this period it seems to have been more closely integrated with the archipelago trade and less so with the high trade of Asia. It was only after the capture of Malacca by the Dutch in 1641 and the subsequent subduing of Acheh that the situation changed substantially for Johor.

Java and Macassar in the Spice Trade

Java was the main source of rice which was carried westward to feed the population of Malacca, and eastward to supply the needs of the spice islands. In the fifteenth century cloves were to be found in northern Moluccas in Ternate, Tidore, Motir, Makian and Batchan. Later its cultivation spread to Ceram and Amboina. Nutmeg and mace were available in the Banda Island—Banda Neira, Banda Lontor, Ai, Rozengain, and Pulo Run. Malacca usually got its spices through the mediation of north Javanese port-towns. It was not possible for the Portuguese to establish an official monopoly over the spice trade in the face of competition from Asians as well as private Portuguese traders. Nowhere in the spice islands could the Portuguese establish a strong foothold. They successively traded with Ternate, Tidore, Bandas and Amboina but could not make any headway because of strong Javanese presence in the spice trade. Thus Japara had close ties with Hitu in Amboina where Islamic faith had been carried by the Javanese. At first Japara and later Grise dominated the clove trade of Amboina. The long established trading lines connecting the different parts of the spice islands with north Java could not be destroyed. In the end the Portuguese were compelled to leave the supply of spices to the Javanese and Malays.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Dutch found the Portuguese giving away Chinese cash as bottomry money to the Javanese who went out to the Moluccas and Bandas from Grise. There seems to have been a resurgence of Javanese trade in the second half of the sixteenth century and the stimulation for it was provided mainly by Portuguese participation in Indonesian trade. The greatest beneficiary of the new situation was the commercial town of Surabaya in east Java.

A variety of circumstances brought about the decline of Javanese trade and shipping in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. The Anglo-Dutch assault on Portuguese-Spanish posts began at a time when the Javanese had a working partnership with the Portuguese traders within the archipelago. Periodic Dutch attacks on Malacca made the Straits region unsafe for trade. In the Moluccas and the Bandas intermittent wars among the Europeans permanently dislocated Java's trade with the spice islands. In the Indonesian waters, the Javanese fleet met the superior naval power of the Dutch.

Within Java the expansion of Mataram posed a new threat to the coastal towns. The maritime principalities of the *pasisir* (north Java) were generally affiliated to Surabaya. Mataram's war with Demak, an ally of Surabaya, started in 1602. Both big and small port-kingdoms were taken one after another. Sultan Agung (1613-46) captured Tuban in 1619. The main target was Surabaya which was under attack since 1610. Agung renewed the raids in 1615 and systematically cut off the supply lines of the city. Surabaya held out for ten more years before it finally succumbed in 1625. By 1639, the eastern extremity of Java's coast had bowed to the power of Mataram. Many of the port towns were laid waste. The overrunning of the *pasisir* by Mataram's troops spelled disaster for Javanese shipping.

When the Portuguese took over Malacca many Muslim merchants migrated to Macassar. Achinese attacks on Johor and the Dutch blockade of Malacca drove Malays and Javanese traders eastward to Macassar which soon became a centre of shipping. It was in the second half of the sixteenth century that the Portuguese began to trade with Macassar on a regular basis. They used to carry Bengal and Coromandel cloth to Macassar which was redistributed throughout the eastern part of the archipelago by Indonesian traders. From Macao the Portuguese brought silk and chinaware as well as gold. Like the Chinese the Portuguese too traded with Timor for sandalwood. Macassar had rice and slaves which the Portuguese bought along with spices and rials brought there from the Moluccas. Later, when the Portuguese were forced to give up trading in the spice islands because of pressure from the English and the Dutch they continued to operate their trading activities from Macassar for quite some time. Early in the seventeenth century Mataram's attacks on the north Java towns put to flight some Javanese who then settled in Banjermasin in Borneo. This area produced a little pepper which was now taken to Macassar. After the complete destruction of the port towns of east Java by Mataram, the spice trade too shifted to Macassar. The disruption of the spice trade in the Moluccas by Dutch naval interference also had the same effect of making Macassar a major centre of spice trade.

The Dutch categorized the trade of Macassar as smuggling. But actually Macassar emerged as the centre of a new trading complex. Trade from north to south and from west to east converged at this point. Boxer has shown that there was a north-south Chinese trading line from Macao to Timor via Manila and Macassar. Merchants from Siam, Patani, Johor and Borneo visited the port. It was connected by trade with the Philippines, the Moluccas the Bandas, Ceram, Amboina, Solor, Timor, Flores, Bima, Bali and Java. At first the sea trade was in the hands of the Malays and the Javanese, the Macassarese being primarily interested in cultivation. In course of time as foreign trade proliferated all over eastern Indonesia, the Macassarese nobility began to take an active part in it. In its heyday Macassar was not only used by the Portuguese as their eastern base but other Europeans like the English and the Danes too vigorously participated in its trade. The presence of the Chinese and the Indians should be borne in mind. For a time the ancient trade route from the spice islands via north Java to western Indonesia was abandoned in favour of a new route from Macassar via southern Borneo to Bantam or the Straits of Malacca.

The politics of southern Celebes was marked by a tension between the Macassarese state of Gowa and the Buginese state of Bone. Islam arrived in Macassar in early seventeenth century and Gowa built up an empire supported by overseas trade. A weakened Ternate was unable to halt this process. Subsequently the Buginese of Bone, the rival ethnic group, allied with the Dutch to bring about the ultimate destruction of the power of Macassar in the 1660's.

The Dutch and the English in Indonesian Trade : Seventeenth Century

The Dutch-English impact on the Indonesian archipelago in the seventeenth century was much greater than that of the Portuguese in the previous century. By the seventeenth century Holland and England had acquired much greater striking power than Portugal ever had. Furthermore the Dutch and the English came to an Indonesia already altered by contact with the Portuguese and consequently one which did hit back more effectively than it did a century earlier. Over the century the interaction generated considerable violence causing a general dislocation of the existing trading arrangement.

For historians the great value of the Dutch-English period lies in the rich documentation it offers. There are travellers' accounts and journals in English and Dutch brought out by the Hakluyt Society and the Linschoten Vereeniging. The French traveller Commodore Beaulieu's journal contains a vivid account of the city of Acheh in the seventeenth century which has been fully utilized by Denys Lombard in his book on Iskandar Muda. Beside the travellers' accounts there exists the vast corpus of records which include among other things the proceedings of the Governor-General's Council in Batavia, account books, daily registers, letters exchanged between trading stations in Asia and the general reports sent out to Europe. Some of these records are available in print such as the English Factory Records, the Jan Pieterszoon Coen papers, the *Dag Register* kept at Batavia and the several volumes of the *Generale Missiven* edited by W. Ph. Coolhaas. The bulk of the enormous documentation, however, remains unprinted.

Historians of Indonesian trade have to rely heavily on European reports of Asian trade. There are no comparable Asian documents. Tome Pires' observation that the Gujaraṭis conducted their business by writing has not been borne out by the discovery of Gujarati trading documents. Except for the interesting harbour regulations available in Malay there hardly exists anything in Indonesian languages which can be used to cross-check documents. Needless to say the European language documents focus more on the official trade of the companies and refer only in passing to Asian trade and the private trade of the Europeans. Yet a careful processing of the available materials yield valuable information about the pattern of Indonesian trade.

For a general picture of Indonesian trade in the period of Anglo-Dutch intervention in the first half of the seventeenth century the writings of J. C. Van Leur and Bernard Schrieke are of great value. While Schrieke has sketched in outline the major developments in pepper and spice trade, Van Leur has tried to visualize the structure of Asian trade in the archipelago area. The handicrafts of India and China were exchanged for the forest and garden products of Indonesia in a far-flung peddling trade in goods of small bulk and high value. Long distance trade was interwoven with port to port trade confined to the archipelago. Merchant princes sent out slaves and pedlars with commenda money. Sometimes the coastal princes and officials also took part in trade either directly or indirectly.

The Dutch and the English had come to Indonesia around 1600 primarily as buyers of pepper and spices. Their arrival touched off a big scale international rivalry in eastern as well as western Indonesia. The Spanish and the Portuguese strongholds were attacked. At the same time the Dutch fought the English all around the archipelago. It was clear that in pursuing trade the Dutch were not prepared to restrict themselves to peaceful competition alone. Trade became dependent upon war. Dutch policy of combining war with trade led to a number of results.

Emergence of Dutch Military Power

In the first half of the seventeenth century the growth of Dutch military power went hand in hand with economic penetration. Yet in order to isolate the economic consequence of Dutch intervention in Indonesia it is necessary to use the military exploits as a backdrop. Amboina was seized by the Dutch in 1605 and Banda Neira was taken in 1609. In a final attempt to subjugate the Bandas the entire population was deported and done away with in a bloody campaign in the 1620's. The Portuguese fortress in Solor fell to the Dutch in 1613 and Malacca in 1641. The high-handed activities of the Dutch aroused strong resistance among the Indonesians. Around 1646 a revolt in Hitu was suppressed. The Moluccas were firmly brought under control in 1663 when the Spanish finally withdrew from Ternate. Tidore submitted to Dutch power in 1667. Meanwhile a prolonged battle was going on with the Macassarese sultanate of Gowa, who were finally subjugated with the help of the Bugis in 1669.

After the fall of Malacca the Dutch utilized Johor and the Minangkabau chiefs to bring about a re-ordering of politics in western Indonesia. By 1666 the power of Acheh was seriously curbed. In 1677 the Dutch acquired a commanding position in the island of Java. Bantam was finally subordinated in 1684. By the middle of the eighteenth century Dutch authority was firmly established over Java and Madura. Throughout this period the English remained a source of irritation for the Dutch. After the Amboina Incident of 1623, the English had been eliminated as competitors from the spice islands. They, however, managed to give effective competition to the Dutch from Macassar, Bantam and later Bencoolen. As the power of the Dutch grew in the archipelago area the English shifted their interest more and more to India and virtually withdrew from Indonesian trade.

The Scramble for Pepper

The coming of the Dutch and the English followed by the French and the Danes caused a scramble for pepper. Acheh and Bantam, Jambi and Palembang were stirred into vigorous political activity by the rising demand for pepper. European attempt to control the pepper trade prompted the native powers to throw up their little monopolies. Iskandar Muda extended his power along both coasts of Sumatra and even across the Strait to Malaya in order to control the pepper producing areas as well as the pepper ports. Similarly the Bantam port authorities tried to keep under its control the sale of pepper to outsiders. It was inevitable that such fierce competition would lead to a rise in price. Thus while in 1600 one could buy ten Bantam bags at ten to twelve rials, in 1620 50 to 60 rials had to be paid for the same amount.

Another result of the rising demand for pepper was the increase in production. By the middle of the seventeenth century pepper production had increased greatly and the warehouses of Batavia were bursting with an oversupply of Indonesian pepper. Pepper was the most important commodity of Dutch-Asiatic trade during greater part of the seventeenth century. More than half of the invoice capital for homeward voyages was invested in pepper. In the second half of the seventeenth century the total quantity of pepper carried to Europe continued to increase. Van Leur estimated the total annual yield of Indonesian pepper at the beginning of the seventeenth century to be 9.3 million pounds. In 1622 the total annual consumption of pepper in Europe was estimated at around 7 million pounds of which 5.6 million pounds were imported by the Dutch and the English. By 1688 the annual European demand rose by 1.6 million pounds. In 1713 among the European buyers the Dutch alone imported 3.87 to 4.30 million pounds of pepper. In 1722 more than 9 million pounds were taken to Europe.

According to Glamann[8] the increase of sale of pepper in Europe was accompanied by an expansion of the Asian market. For quite some time in early eighteenth century the greater part of Indonesian pepper was sold in Asia. Until the arrival of the Dutch the bulk of the Indonesian pepper used to be exported to China. With the European demand added to it the Indonesian producer had to cater to a larger market. There might have been a shift in the pattern of export from China to Europe in the early decades of the seventeenth century, but one has to remember that the Asiatic market for Indonesian pepper expanded again in the eighteenth century.

After the capture of Malacca in 1641 the Dutch made a bid to secure a monopoly in pepper and to establish military posts to ensure it. Pressure was put on Palembang and Jambi to eliminate Chinese competitors and to settle a fixed price. In the end, however the Dutch attempt to monopolize the pepper trade was not successful. In the face of competition from the English, the French, the Danes, the Portuguese, the Chinese and the Indians, the Dutch could not establish a monolithic control over the pepper trade. Moreover the pepper producing centres were distributed over too wide an area for the Dutch to enable them to appropriate the entire produce for export.

Dutch Control Over Spice Trade

The forcible entry of the Dutch into the spice trade threw out of gear the older arrangement under which many of the spice islands were affiliated to Ternate on the one hand and with Malay and Javanese traders on the other. As the Dutch proceeded with their campaigns in the Bandas and the Moluccas, the earlier links with Ternate and Java were snapped. The Banda Islands were actually seized by Coen in 1621 but it took a long time to enforce an effective monopoly over the spice trade there. Attention has already been drawn to the fact that Macassar provided a base of operation for the English and the Danes, the Chinese and the Indians who traded in cloves, nutmeg and mace in defiance of the Dutch monopoly. Even the Portuguese and the French took part in this so-called 'smuggling trade'.

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[8] Glamann, K., *Dutch–Asiatic Trade 1620-1740* (The Hague, 1954).

Needless to say the Dutch met with a lot of opposition from the spice islanders. These people were customarily kept supplied with food and cloth by Indonesian as well as foreign Asian merchants. In the early decades of the seventeenth century the English, the Danes and the Portuguese partly took over the supply of rice and cloth to eastern Indonesia, and they received substantial assistance from native Indonesians and continental Asian traders. With superior naval backing the Dutch were able ultimately to break the resistance in the spice islands. Macassar too was finally overpowered. Dutch monopoly was effectively established towards the end of the seventeenth century. The VOC was now in a position to set an arbitrarily low price for delivery. At the European end the Dutch could control the price of spices without any fear of being undersold by others.

To control the production of cloves the Dutch tried to restrict its cultivation to Amboina. In 1622 Amboina and Ceram produced double the quantity of cloves consumed by the world market. To avoid excess supply, the Dutch periodically cut down trees. These extirpations began as early as 1613 and were carried out from time to time until the closing decades of the eighteenth century. At first the Dutch destroyed spice trees and even coconut and sago palm in order to punish natives who sold spices to smugglers. Later this policy was continued with a view to deprive the English of a share of spices. Systematic extirpation of spice trees became necessary above all to control production for the sake of monopoly prices. In 1716 more than 150,000 young clove trees were destroyed. Large scale extirpations caused a sharp decline in output. In the 1720's new plantations were started. These alternations of extirpation and laying out new plantations were a marked feature of the monopolistic policy of the Dutch with regard to the spices. The net result was that over a period production per tree decreased. To compensate for the losses suffered for limiting the production, the VOC initiated the cultivation of indigo and coffee in Amboina in the first two decades of the eighteenth century.

Coupled with the policy of extirpation was a policy of destruction of surplus stock. In 1718-19 more than six million pounds of spices were destroyed in Batavia. Periodic clearing of the warehouses in the Netherlands also involved large scale destruction of spices. Sale of spices in Asia suffered as a result of this monopolistic policy. Indian merchants in Agra complained that sale of cloves had fallen about three times under the Dutch compared to the level of sale of the Portuguese times. The heavy-handed and destructive policy of the Dutch, which in the process of its execution produced an empire, ultimately proved futile because with the expansion of world trade spices became less and less significant. Over a period of two centuries one can notice an absolute decline in export. In 1621 the Company's estimated annual sale of spices in Europe was 1,020,000 pounds. The figure for 1795 was 670,000 pounds.

Retreat of the Indian Ocean Traders

The Dutch and the English in Indonesia needed a good supply of Indian cloth to buy pepper and spices. Before they could find footholds in Surat and Coromandel they collected Indian cloth primarily from Acheh. Most of the ports of Indonesia were provided with Indian textiles by the Portuguese and the Indians themselves. An English estimate of 1610 shows that about 174,000 pieces of Indian cloth could be sold annually in Sumatra's west coast. Of these about 160,000 pieces were ordinary cloth for common use. It was essential for the English and the Dutch to establish bases in the cloth producing areas of Gujarat and Coromandel. This was achieved in the 1620's. Around 1615 the English temporarily replaced the Gujaratis in carrying cloth from Surat to Acheh. They then stretched the trading line up to Bantam. About the same time the Dutch began to carry Indian cloth from Coromandel to Bantam touching Sumatra on the way. They too acquired a factory in Surat.

The entry of the English and the Dutch into the carrying trade of Indian cloth had far-reaching consequences. As the spice islands passed under Dutch hegemony the Indian carrying trade in cloth and spices was badly hurt. The Dutch policy of excluding the foreign Asians from the spice islands was effective. Although a few Indian ships continued to participate in the so-called 'smuggling trade' of Macassar for a short period, Indian traders virtually withdrew from eastern Indonesia, with their influence declining in Bantam which was a big spice market. Formerly the Gujaratis took pepper and spices to the Red Sea area. From a study of the situation in Mocha in the seventeenth century it appears that this trade had sharply declined. The Europeans took over the carrying trade in spices and cloth between India and Indonesia. Indians, however, continued to visit Acheh and the Malayan ports in search of tin and pepper. The Tamils maintained their links with Portuguese Malacca. After 1641 the Dutch attempt to monopolize the tin trade failed in the face of strong Indian competition. In the second half of the seventeenth century the rise of Johor in alliance with the Dutch gave the Indians opportunity to establish links with Riau which was the up and coming emporium for archipelago trade. Indian Ocean traders were generally on the retreat in the face of advancing Dutch power in Indonesia but after 1670 there was some kind of a resurgence of Indian trade in the Bay of Bengal area which helped to re-establish links with western Indonesia.

Decline of Javanese Shipping

It is difficult to ascertain how much of Javanese shipping survived at the end of the seventeenth century. In the pre-European days the Javanese very largely dominated the redistribution trade in the archipelago. It should be recalled that the Java fleet was badly damaged during an assault on Malacca immediately after the Portuguese conquest. There was a resurgence of Javanese trade and shipping in the second half of the sixteenth century. A close collaboration developed between Javanese spice traders and the Indian Ocean merchants. The Gujaratis who kept the west Asian ports supplied with pepper and spices were in touch with the traders of north Java. In the seventeenth century Dutch naval expeditions in the spice islands dislocated Java's connections with that region. The systematic attack on the coastal ports of Java by the Mataram forces spread devastation all along the *pasisir* on which Javanese shipping was hinged. Overwhelming Dutch military presence made the Indian Ocean merchants withdraw from the Java Sea, something which must have badly affected what remained of Javanese trade and shipping. It is a story of steady retreat in the face of adverse circumstances. C. R. Boxer points out that the Dutch subjugation of Bantam in 1682-84 stifled the possible growth of an indigenous merchant fleet which the sultan had been building up with European help.

Batavia and the Chinese Trade in Indonesia

The rise of Batavia as the central port of the Dutch East India Company in Indonesia was one of the major developments in the seventeeth century. The VOC headquarters was first located in Amboina. It was soon realized that the central rendezvous had to be near either the Straits of Malacca or the Sunda Strait. After considering a few sites the Dutch finally fixed their headquarters in 1619, at Jakarta, which they named Batavia. Land had been granted by the ruler of Jakarta on the eastern bank of the Chiliwong river, near the Chinese quarter. The nucleus of the Dutch city was formed by the two stone buildings, the Nassau and the Mauritius. By 1627 the Casteel Batavia, which was the main fortress guarding the Dutch outfitting station of Jakarta, was completed. At the initiative of Jan Pieterszoon Coen a new town was laid out on the model of a fortified European city. Batavia grew up as a city of canals and tree-lined streets perhaps to recall the images of Amsterdam to the European residents. By 1667 the town assumed a structure which it retained through the eighteenth century. The earlier irregular boundary line had given way to a regular rectangular shape 'with streets and canals intersecting at right angles surrounded by walls and bastions'.

It would be wrong to visualize Batavia primarily as a European town transplanted in Indonesia. With a Dutch fortress commanding the city Batavia was basically a Chinese town. Governor-General Coen wanted to make Batavia the terminal point of Chinese trade in Indonesia. Both by inducement and by force he succeeded in pulling away to Batavia Chinese trade from Bantam, Straits of Malacca, north Java towns and elsewhere. He conceived a grand design of diverting the trade between China and

Manila to Batavia. Although he was not entirely successful in attaining his objectives Coen was able to make Batavia the central port of a new trading network encompassing the Indonesian archipelago and beyond. The outer rim of this vast trading complex touched the major ports of Asia from Mocha to Japan. The city itself was built and extended mostly by Chinese labour, although some labourers were imported from south India. Batavia's markets and harbours were kept alive by Chinese trade which was meant to be the foundation upon which the structure of European trade could be built. Coen wanted the Company to confine itself to wholesale trading, the burghers to act as middlemen and the Chinese to take over retail trade. The burghers did not live up to his expectation but the commercial success of the Chinese in Batavia was a cause of anxiety for the successors of Coen. The Dutch could not avoid having an ambivalent attitude toward the Chinese. They needed the Chinese to keep the city going yet they reacted nervously to Chinese business efficiency and the steady inflow of immigrants.

The population of Batavia grew from 6000 in 1623 to 8000 in 1632 and around 12000 in 1638. Out of this there were not more than 400 Chinese in 1619, about 2000 in 1629 and the figure did not reach 10,000 until 1725. Around 1730 the Chinese formed roughly 20% of the total population of Batavia, their number having doubled between 1680 and 1740.

As early as 1619 Coen had appointed Su Ming-Kang (Bencon) as captain of the Chinese citizenry. He was authorized to settle all important matters of the Chinese community in the city. The Chinese not only dominated economic activity in Batavia in their capacity as big merchants, shopkeepers and small traders, craftsmen and labourers, but they also acted as administrative representatives of the Dutch government in various matters. In fact the Dutch could not do without the Chinese in Batavia. Yet, as it happened, the movement of the Chinese within the city was not entirely free. Beside the Chinese, ethnic groups from all over Indonesia settled in and around Batavia forming little *kampongs* of their own. The Balinese formed a large contingent but the Javanese were not allowed to stay in the city after dusk. The attacks on the town by Javanese of Mataram and Bantam might have had something to do with this distrust.

It is worth keeping in mind that Batavia developed as a place of collaboration between the Dutch and the Chinese to the exclusion of the Javanese. The collaboration was particularly noticeable in the sphere of maritime trade. Another important sector of co-operation and partnership was agricultural development of the countryside around Batavia. In the period under study sugar mills worked mostly by the Chinese were developed in the area around Batavia. But uneven growth led on to a critical situation. In a brilliant article on Batavia, which he prefers to call a 'Chinese colonial town' Leonard Blusse analyses for us the background of the Chinese uprising of 1740 (see Bibliography). Through long experience the Dutch had worked out a system of cooperation with the Chinese in the sphere of inter-island trade. In the field of agricultural development in the vicinity of Batavia the relationship between the two partners was as yet unstable. The Chinese captains did not enjoy sufficient authority in the countryside. Generally speaking life of the common Chinese in the *ommelanden* around the city, was made difficult by taxes of all kinds. The sherifs were oppressive and corrupt. The sugar industry in its better days attracted a large Chinese population. In periods of depression the jobless Chinese created a special broblem. In 1740 a decline in the sugar industry created conditions for an explosive situation. The Dutch chose the wrong moment to try to enforce regulations about Chinese immigration. Their attempt to deport unlawful immigrants to Sri Lanka and Cape Town caused grave misgivings. When the trouble broke out thousands of Chinese perished in what is called the Batavian Fury. The massacre of the Chinese in Batavia in 1740 was a symptom of an inner decline. All was not well with the VOC and the authorities in Batavia were losing grip over matters of vital concern.

Chinese Junk Trade

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Batavia was mainly sustained by the Chinese junk trade operating between the Fukien region of south China and Java. China's sea trade with southeast Asian countries had two arms : one arm stretched eastward to Manila, Sulu Islands and the Moluccas and the other westward to Indo-China, Malaya and west Java. In another excellent article on the Chinese trade to Batavia during the days of the VOC, Leonard Blusse recalls that Van Leur was among the first scholars to grasp the great importance of the Fukien-Batavia trade. According Van Leur' estimate China sent out four junks to Batavia, four to Cambodia, three to Siam, one to Patani, one to Jambi, one to Grise and a hundred smaller junks to Manila every year. The Manila trade was highly profitable for the Chinese as it yielded silver which had relatively greater purchasing power in China than anywhere else.

As has been noted earlier it was through Coen's efforts that Chinese trade was attracted to Batavia in the 1620's. However, the Dutch established some control over the Chinese trade only after the destruction of Macassar in 1667 and the subjugation of Bantam in 1684. But at no time could the Dutch stop the Chinese from trading with Malaya. It took three weeks to sail between Amoy and the straits of Banka. The *nakhodas* of the Chinese ships had an important status in the port of Batavia and were consulted in policy matters by the Dutch authorities. The Chinese usually carried sugar, ordinary porcelain, coarse textiles, iron pots and pans, fruits and about 1000 immigrants every year to Batavia. The junk trade was at first geared to the needs of the local economy and the Chinese carefully avoided encroaching upon the Company's monopolies. On their return trip the Chinese took away pepper, sandalwood, elephant tusks, incense, birds' nests and great quantities of silver.

The Fukien–Batavia trade was interrupted from time to time by political disturbances in China between 1644 and 1684. In Blusse's opinion the junk trade reached a high point in the period 1690-1730. Attempts by the Dutch to establish direct trade with China did not succeed. In 1690's the Dutch found it more profitable to turn away from the south coast of China and trade with Bengal instead. Eventually the Dutch had to give up direct trading with China and rely on the Chinese junk trade to Batavia to meet the needs of European trade. The English were envious of the Dutch partnership with the Chinese in Batavia. The Dutch were however afraid that the English might catch up with the China trade to Johor where the Chinese junks went regularly in search of tin.

After the massacre of the Chinese in 1740 appeals were made to the Emperor of China to put a stop to the junk trade to Batavia. Anxious to save the trade the coastal viceroys revealed that 70 to 80 per cent of China's trade with the countries of the Southern Seas went to Siam, Johor and another countries and only 20 per cent went to Batavia. From the middle of the eighteenth century the Chinese trade was shifting away from Batavia toward the west to meet the demands of the Indian Ocean trade. Riau had long emerged as a crucial entrepôt. Johor now became the centre for redistribution of Chinese goods in the archipelago where the Bugis increasingly made their presence felt. The junk trade to Batavia declined sharply in the years 1787-91. Meanwhile the English had founded Penang in western Malaya in 1786, and before long the English trade from the Bay of Bengal would link up with the China trade across the Straits of Malacca.

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12

Private British Trade in the Indian Ocean Before 1800

P. J. Marshall

Both to contemporaries and to later generations the embodiment of Europe's East India trade has always seemed to be the great ship, be it carrack, galleon or East Indiaman, making its stately way with a rich cargo of spices, textiles or tea from Asia to its home port in Europe. The success or failure of Asian trading has been assessed on how well such cargoes sold when the ships got to Europe. Yet from early in sixteenth century Europeans were deeply concerned in ships that never went to Europe at all, sailing instead from one part of Asia to another, and the final outcome of the East India trades could depend as much on the result of these voyages as on sales in Europe.

Ships employed in what came to be called 'the country trade' were of several kinds: ships out from Europe could be kept in Asian waters, the East India companies or the *Estado da India* could commission ships to be built in Asia, and what became commonest of all, locally built ships could be operated by private individuals. Throughout the eighteenth century and possibly earlier Englishmen were more heavily involved in shipping of this last category than were any other Europeans. Such Englishmen and their ships are the subject of this chapter.

When the East India Company's monopoly was broken in 1813 and its trade finally ceased in 1833, the importance of English 'private' shipping in Asian waters was plain for all to see. The field was left entirely clear for shipping from British ports or from the ports of India and later from Singapore or Hong Kong. A network of shipping varying from the great P & O liners to the tramps of Conrad's novels was to come into existence. But by 1813 the Asian-based trading fleets were already very well established and had a history going back to the seventeenth century. It is, however, only in recent years that historians have come to be interested in the early phases of private British shipping. For the historians of the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries private enterprise with its overtones of self-seeking and corruption was both morally distasteful and irrelevant to the great themes of the rise of empire and the shaping of the future British administration of India. Moreover, although material on the history of private shipping does survive in some abundance, it requires tenacity to assemble it. The staple sources for the history of early British India—the records of the English factories in Asia, tend not to dwell on the details of private trade which was often a contentious subject with the Company at home. The personal papers of individual Englishmen in India (as Dr. Watson stresses at the end of his chapter),[1] legal records in Britain and in India, and the archives of the foreign companies must be consulted.

The first scholar systematically to master such material and to do full justice to the importance of private trade during the period of the monopoly of the East India Company was Professor Holden Furber in his *John Company at Work* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), a study of the 1780's and 1790's. In two later books, *Bombay Presidency in the Mid-eighteenth Century* (Bombay, 1965) and *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient: 1600 to 1800* (Minneapolis, 1976), Furber has pursued the theme back into the early eighteenth century. His conclusions remain essentially the same. He finds the private sector of British activity in Asia much more vigorous than that of other Europeans throughout the eighteenth century. This vigorous private sector gave the British a dominant position in inter-Asian trade.

From dominance in the 'country trade' momentous consequences ensued: private merchants often extended British influence in an aggressive way well beyond the normal sphere of the Company's own trade, important sections of the Indian business communities were drawn into close relations with them and thus their loyalty to their own rulers was undermined, and even other Europeans became the clients of the British country traders. The triumph of British trade contributed much to the wealth of the British settlements and thus eventually to sustaining the British war effort in the age of Clive and Hastings. To some historians the private traders even had an important role in generating the friction with Indian rulers that led to war. Furber's work on the eighteenth century has recently been extended even further back into the second half of the seventeenth century. Dr. Bruce Watson's *Foundation for Empire: English Private Trade in India: 1659-1760* (New Delhi, 1980) and Dr. Elizabeth Saxe's 'Fortune's Tangled Webb: Trading Networks of English Entrepreneurs in Eastern India 1657-1717', Ph.D thesis, Yale (1979) provide abundant evidence for the vitality of English private country trade in the later seventeenth century.

For the eighteenth century English 'private' trade and English 'country' trade were virtually the same thing: the East India Company did relatively little inter-Asian trading which was left to individuals. For much of the seventeenth century, however, the Company was an active country trader and it tried to prevent or at least to restrict the enterprise of individuals. Like the Portuguese or the Dutch, the English Company found it necessary to procure cargoes from one part of Asia with goods which it had obtained in another, shipping Indian cloth to Indonesia to pay for spices being an obvious example. Like the Dutch and the Portuguese, the East India Company had also tried to boost their trading capital by profits earned from inter-Asian trading. Commonly held beliefs about the profitablity of such trading are vividly illustrated in a pamphlet of 1644:

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[1] *Infra,* p.116.

> ....the trade to and from India, and from port to port in the several places of India, and other kingdoms neer adjacent, is the most hopefull, beneficiall of any part of the world; wherein by God's blessing, a competency (if not a superfluity) in estate is to be attained unto with such small stock, in 4,5,6, or 7 yeares time; which 3 or 4 times so many yeares spent in other countries will not so suddenly supply with far greater stock. .....and by a voyage in three, foure, or five months time too and again, there may be gained, 30,40,50,60,80 and 100 per cent profit, and more in severall sorts of commodities.[2]

Belief in profits of this order inevitably encouraged individual Englishmen to try their hands at winning 'a competency (if not a superfluity)' by inter-Asian trading. The obvious vehicle for such early ventures was the Company's own shipping; members of the crew apparently speculated in goods on their own behalf as the ships moved from one Asian port to another. Such operations were much facilitated by the establishment of permanent factories in Asian ports, private goods being consigned from one factory to another. As early as 1614, the Company complained about the arrangements for disposing of goods being made between the factors at Surat and those at Bantam.[3] When the *James* arrived at Bantam in 1613 she was so heavily laden with 300 bales of private trade that she had become more like a 'sty for swine than a ship for men'.[4]

The scale of private inter-Asian trade in the first half of the seventeenth century is very hard to estimate, but the indications suggest that it was already quite considerable. Private trade to Persia alone in 1630 was said to be worth £30,000, equivalent to nearly one third of the stock of the Company's own Persian voyage that year.[5] Stories were beginning to circulate about substantial fortunes being made by the Company's factors, largely out of private trade. In the 1630's men were said to be coming home from the east worth £30,000 or £40,000;[6] some of those who had served at

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[2] *A True Declaration of the Intollerable Wrongs done to Richard Boothby* (London, 1644), Epistle dedicatory.

[3] *Voyage of Thomas Best to the East Indies 1612-14,* ed. W. Foster (London, 1934), pp.273-4.

[4] *Calendar of State Papers. Colonial Series: East Indies and Persia 1630-4* (London, 1892), p.225.

[5] Ibid., p.27.

[6] Ibid., p.83.

Madras were believed by the 1650's to have accumulated £50,000.[7] These were very substantial mercantile fortunes by any standard.

In the middle decades of the seventeenth century, roughly from the 1640's to the 1670's, developments took place which were to set the growth of English private trade into a pattern that was to last until the late eighteenth century. Quite sizeable European trading communities were to develop in Indian ports under some degree of British authority. These cummunities came to depend less and less on the Company's shipping for their trade as they built up their own fleets of merchant ships. Also during this period private trading by sea was given a wide measure of official toleration by the East India Company, which was a clear recognition of the degree of success already achieved.

Private trading no doubt took place wherever Englishmen went in the service of the East India Company and even, as was the case in Siam in the later seventeenth century, where they served Asian rulers. But in the middle of the century there was some consolidation of the Company's operations around certain Indian factories. In such places the number of Englishmen increased, providing a broader base for those willing to invest in overseas trade and shipowning and ultimately in marine insurance. English commercial law was enforced as British authority increased. The Company's factors were generally the most prominent private traders, as they had been from the outset, but various other Englishmen lived around the Indian factories and they also became involved in seaborne trade. In theory the East India Company exercised a strict control over those who went to India; in practice many individuals lived in Asia without its sanction.

In 1662 the Company decided to accept with relatively good grace what it could not prevent and to allow such men to 'live peaceably and quietly without disturbance or discouragement' so long as they did not hamper its own trading.[8] Individuals outside the service were supposed to apply for official licence to live in Asia as 'freemen' or later as 'free merchants' and 'free mariners'. Many seem to have evaded this requirement. Company servants and private Englishmen had neither the skills nor the resources to sustain trading fleets on their own and therefore, as Dr. Watson has shown, the English trading communities were of necessity involved at many points with Indians as trading partners, investors, managers, agents and brokers.[9] Other Asian groups, most obviously the Jews and the Armenians, developed interests in private English shipping and congregated in the East India Company's factory towns as did Europeans of other nationalities. Madras was the earliest of the English settlements to become a major Asian port, followed later by Bombay and later still by Calcutta. Together with Surat and Bantam, until it was taken by the Dutch in 1682, these three ports were to be the major centres of English private shipping from the mid-seventeenth century.

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[7] Saxe, 'Fortune's Tangled Webb: Trading Networks of English Entrepreneurs in Eastern India 1657-1717', Ph.D. Thesis, Yale (1979), p.53.

[8] Despatch of Fort St. George, 20 Feb. 1662, Indian Office Records, E/3/86, pp.98-9.

[9] *Infra,* pp.304-13.

Early private trading seems mostly to have involved the clandestine loading of goods on the Company's ships. Later in the seventeenth century private traders sometimes openly hired the Comapny's European ships for their own voyages, but most of their trade was carried in locally built ships, either hired or purchased from Asians or specially built in Asian yards. Early references to individuals owning ships are not easy to find. In 1632 the Company was investigating accusations against their servants at Armagon on the Coromandel coast. They were said to be 'employing junks' to ship textiles to Burma and Siam.[10] A year later the President of Surat was accused for having 'provided a junk to sweep up much wealth in short time'.[11] In the 1660's William Jearsey, an ambitious and obstreperous servant of the Company, was operating nine ships from Masulipatnam.[12] A comparable growth in privately owned shipping was taking place at the same time at other English settlements.[13]

These private ships are perhaps best described as hybrid Indo-European ones. Shipyards in India completely under British management were a development of the later eighteenth century, but by the middle of the seventeenth century Indian builders in Gujarat, at Madapollam on the Coromandal coast or in Burma had been influenced by European ship design. They were using large quantities of European ships' stores, and, if they were not already doing so, were shortly to employ some European craftsmen. The ships of the European private traders were sailed by Indian crews under the command of European officers with possibly a European gunner or boatswain. That such men could sometimes serve on Indian owned ships too shows how blurred the distinction between 'European' and 'Asian' shipping could be. 'European' ships with mostly Asian crews carried cargoes provided by Asian merchants; and Asians were sometimes part-owners, but more commonly the voyage was partially financed by loans from Asians.

The mid-seventeenth century expansion of private English trade began in the face of strong opposition from the East India Company. Private trade was regarded as damaging competiton for the Company's own country trade and repeated instructions were issued that it should be eliminated or at least curtailed within strict limits. A reappriasal began in the 1660's. Restrictive policies had been very difficult to enforce, especially

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[10] *Cal. State Papers: East Indies and Persia 1630-4*, p.347.

[11] Ibid., p.445.

[12] Bowrey, Thomas, *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal 1669-79*, ed. R. C. Temple (Cambridge, 1905), p.251.

[13] Watson, *Foundation for Empire*, p.82.

when the Company's monopoly had been largely inoperative during the civil war and the interregnum in England. At the same time country trading on the Company's behalf seemed to have become unprofitable. Its returns hardly defrayed the cost of the shipping used for it. Were the Company to withdraw from most of its own inter-Asian trade; the main reason for trying to prevent private trade would disappear, while on the other hand, private English trade would at least maintain an English presence in the trade between Asian ports; the larger the volume of such trade the higher would be the customs receipts at ports under the Company's authority. In 1667, 1670, 1674, 1675 and 1679 the East India Company issued a series of 'indulgences', opening the trade to virtually every part of Asia in nearly all commodities to private English ships based in Asia. Much conflict between the Company and the private traders lay ahead over what was regarded as undue competition for shipping space between Asian ports or for commodities needed by the Company for Europe but the indulgences of the 1660's and 1670's were never to be revoked. English trade in Asia acquired a tolerated private sector that was unique among the major East India companies.[14]

The ports at which private English shipping became established from the mid-seventeenth century were those which already had the highly developed overseas trading network and vigorous Indian merchant communities with their own trading fleets which are described in Professor Arasaratnam's chapter.[15] Surat and Bombay were part of Gujarat's trading system, Masulipatnam and Madras served the Coromandel coast, and Calcutta became a major outlet for Bengal's trade. The relationship between the English and the Asian business world all round them is a complex and controversial subject. Until late in the eighteenth century, by far the largest part of the cargoes carried by the private English ships consisted of goods of two kinds: freight consigned to them by Asian merchants, often accompanied by the merchant or his agent, and commodities bought by European owners to sell to Asian purchasers at the ships' destinations. The English were thus offering themselves as alternative carriers or alternative suppliers between one centre of Asian trade and another. They were operating along trade routes already well established rather than pioneering new routes for new commodities. In short, the private English shipowner was trying to gain a stake in an existing Asian trading world.

Historians in the past were often inclined to see the success of the English in winning such a stake as the triumph of ruthless competition.

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[14] For the change of course in the 1660's and 1670's, see K. N. Chaudhuri, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 1978), pp.209-10; P. J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes: the British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1976), pp.19-20; Watson, *Foundation for Empire*, pp.75-84.

[15] *Supra*, Chapter 5.

Asian shipowners were forced off the seas either by the naval power of the East India Company or because they could not compete with the much more efficient service offered by the English ships. Essays in this book, however, reflect a different way of looking at the relationship between Europeans and Asian shipping which has been adopted by historians in recent years. European involvement in Asian trade is not necessarily seen as being at the expense of Asians. The operations of the two could complement one another as well as being in competition. Under favourable conditions both could grow, the Europeans bringing skills that enabled existing trading networks to be expanded and filling gaps that Asians could not of themselves have filled. Professor Arasaratnam shows how English private shipping participated in the 'boom' conditions enjoyed by Indian trade during the seventeenth century.[16]

Crude theories about English shipping winning victories in all-out competition with Asians encounter formidable difficulties. The Asian trading world with its huge volume of shipping was too complex for even the most belligerent Europeans to impose effective control on it during the centuries covered by this book. Nor were the English in fact very belligerent. The Company was not prepared to lavish resources on deploying extremely costly shipping to disrupt Asian trade routes or to blockade Asian ports so that the trade of private individuals could flourish. 'Passes' were the normal method used by Europeans who tried to regulate Asian shipping. The English Company did issue passes to Asians, but it would seem that this was done to raise revenue rather than to restrict trade. Penalties were not enforced on those who did not choose to take the English pass. If the use of force by the English did not contribute to the rise of private English shipping, it may be that the English gained from the use of force by others, since Asian merchant began entrusting their goods to English ships as protection against the activities of other Europeans.

Such considerations may have helped the English to secure part of India's trade with Indonesia where the Dutch tried to regulate trade by issuing or witholding of passes. But the evidence for this is, however, somewhat inconclusive. Important Indonesian ports which Indian ships frequented were outside Dutch control and elsewhere the enforcement of their pass regulations was erratic. For most of the seventeenth century Indian shipping seems to have traded relatively freely with certian parts of Indonesia. In those areas where it was unwise for them to venture, such as the Moluccas, an English pass would not have given them any added security against the Dutch. Nevertheless, the dangers of the Asian seas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were real enough. The employment of space on English ships, which appeared to have the full backing of the English Company, may well have seemed to be an attractive insurance for Asian merchants against the unpredictability of Dutch and Portuguese, the assaults of pirates of all sorts, and the high-handedness and extortion by port authorities.

Contemporary Englishmen were in no doubt that their real advantage lay in their incomparable skill as seamen and navigators. They generally had a low opinion of Asian abilities in such matters. Successful voyages from one part of Asia to another required the proper utilization of the monsoon system. A voyage that was caught by the changing of the monsoon would have to be interrupted and was said to have 'missed its passage'. In such circumstances heavy loss was almost inevitable for those with goods on board.

The English believed that their ships could be relied upon to sail punctually with the monsoons while Asian ships were unreliable. Hence the wise merchant would choose an English ship. Such chauvinism presumably had some foundation, although it is worth bearing in mind that differences between 'English' and 'Asian' ships could often be at best marginal: the crews were the same, the ships were likely to be of the same type and English officers with their vaunted navigational skills took service on Asian ships. The Asian merchant who believed that English ships offered him greater immunity from political dangers and more efficient sailing had to pay a high price for these advantages. The operating costs of English country ships were very high and their owners expected to make a comfortable profit from their venture. English freight rates were therefore considerably higher than those offered for Asian ships.[17]

Any simple picture of the English sweeping their Asian competitors off the seas, either by fire power or by technological sophistication will have to be discarded. The English were offering a high cost service, which was perhaps rather more reliable and rather more secure than that which Asians could offer. Was this a threat to Asian shipowners to which they had no answer and which would eventually win the most valuable cargoes from them? Or was it merely an alternative, acceptable to some Asian freighters in times of expansion, but only able to flourish when Asian shipping was drastically reduced for reasons that have nothing to do with European competition? Answers to these questions may emerge from an examination of each of the main Indian trading regions.

The most spectacular growth in English private trade during the seventeenth century took place on the Coromandel coast. Coromandel was an important textile producing area, specializing in exports to southeast Asia, but also developing trade with western India and the western Indian Ocean. The major ports of the Coromandel coast were situated in a long string to the south or clustered around the Krishna and Godavari rivers further north.

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[16] *Supra,* p.116.

[17] Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*, p.58.

The Mughals overthrew the sultanate of Golconda at the end of the seventeenth century, but the Coromandel coast was only partially and superficially incorporated into the empire: political authority became fragmented and conditions were often unstable. Indian merchants thus tended to be drawn into closer relations with Europeans and to seek the relative security of European towns and shipping earlier than was the case elsewhere.[18] Yet even before the Mughal conquest, Englishmen found profitable openings in Coromandel's seaborne trade. The author of a tract published in 1641 described the ports of Coromandel as 'open' and 'most willing to entertaine strangers and their trade; and passengers ready to commit both themselves and their goods in our ships which are securer and of better accommodation and defence then the country junckes.[19] Until the Mughal conquest, the English factory staff at Masulipatnam, the major port of Golconda, were very actively engaged as private individuals in the inter-Asian trade that made Masulipatnam one of the great ports of the mid-seventeenth century.[20]

By the end of the century, however, English activities of all kinds were overwhelmingly concentrated at Madras. Madras virtually owed its existence to the English settlement there, yet by 1700 its exultant governor could write that 'there was at one time fifty sayle of ships in the roade, besides small craft at least 200; ...The place, when I left it, was not onely admired but in favour of all the kings and princes in those parts; a regular and peaceable government within ourselves, and continued friendship of all about us'.[21] Madras had not only become a major exporter of Coromandel textiles, it had become an entrepôt handling trade from all parts of Asia from the Far East to the Persian Gulf. It was called 'an emblem of Holland in supplying foreign markets with foreign goods'.[22] At the end of the seventeenth century Madras was transhipping porcelain, alum, tutenag and sugar from China to western India and Bengal, sugar, piece goods and silk to Surat and the Persian Gulf.

Trading voyages from Madras and indeed other parts of India seem to have fallen into two categories: long distance voyages and short hauls. Long distance voyages aimed at a single market, although trading might take place at intermediate ports. The ship might be away for a year or more. With high costs a considerable part of the cargo was likely to consist of commodities of high value on which a substantial profit could be made. On short hauls the ship was expected to make several voyages in a year to a nearby destination or to trade from port to port, exchanging commodities obtained at one place for goods at another. Lower profits on the quick turnover of bulk commodities could be accepted.

Long distance voyages from Madras, in which the 'greatest ships' were sent to 'the most desir'd' markets, went to China and Manila in the east and to the Red Sea or the Persian Gulf to the west.[23] The most elaborate undertakings of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century seem to have been the Chinese voyages. Large partnerships were formed to invest in the ships, including not only Englishmen at Madras, but also those in western India, Surat, Bombay and the Malabar ports. Many voyages seem to have started and finished at Surat. Silver, the main medium of exchange in China, was exported in large quantities and gold, the basic precious metal of Coromandel, was brought back. 'Our silver generally is carry'd for China, and a great deal of that gold which returns is carry'd up into the countrey for the making of jewells and coining it in their own mints'.[24] The 'China goods', tutenag, quicksilver, alum and sugar, were sent on from Madras to western India.[25]

The Manila trade involved the exchange of Indian textiles for American silver conveyed across the Atlantic by the famous galleons from Acapulco. Under the Spanish regulations the only European ships permitted into Manila were Portuguese ones. Both Portuguese and Armenian ships were already making voyages from the Coromandel coast to Manila in the 1670's when the Madras English started to take an active interest in the trade. From 1674 English-owned ships under Portuguese colours began to make regular voyages. Thereafter increasing numbers of sailings were recorded from Madras, except during years of the Anglo-Spanish War. For most of the eighteenth century an average of three ships a year went from Madras to Manila. English profits came either from high freight charges paid by Asian merchants, usually Armenian, or from direct dealing in textiles.[26] Textiles were the staple of long distance trade from Madras to the west, that is to Surat, the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea. Some of the textiles carried on these voyages consisted of the piece goods which were made on the Coromandel coaast, but Bengal goods were extremely important.

In 1712 the success of the westward voyages was said to depend 'intirely upon the freight procurable in Bengall'.[27] In the early eighteenth century the English at Madras were to find it increasingly difficult to get access to Bengal and their trade was to suffer accordingly. At the height of their prosperity, however, the Company servants at Madras claimed that they had regularly sent five or six ships to Bengal to collect goods for Surat and the Persian Gulf.[28] If this is a reliable estimate, Madras might have ten or a dozen ships engaged in the potentially lucrative long-distance trades to China, Manila or the western Indian Ocean in a good year.

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[18] Richard, J. F.,'European City-States on the Coromandal Coast', *Studies in the Foreign Relations of India*, ed. P. M. Joshi (Hyderabad, 1975), pp.508-20; S. Arasaratnam, 'Indian Commercial Groups and European Traders, 1600-1800', *South Asia*, 1 (1978), no.2, p.51.

[19] *The East India Trade* (London, 1641), p.6.

[20] Saxe, 'Fortune's Tangled Webb', pp.36-45.

[21] *Historical Manuscripts Commission, 13th Report*, pt.iii, *MSS of J. B. Fortescue*, 1 (London, 1892), p.45.

[22] Hamilton, A.,*A New Account of the East Indies*, ed. W. Foster (London, 1930), 1, p.203.

[23] Lockyer, C.,*An Account of the Trade in India* (London, 1711), p.15.

[24] *The Diary of William Hedges*, ed. H. Yule (London, 1888-9), 3, pp.lxxx-lxxxi.

[25] Important collections of documents relating to a number of Chine voyages are preserved in *The Scattergoods and the East India Company*, eds. R. C. Temple, L. M. Anstey, B. P. Scattergood (Harpenden, 1935).

[26] Quiason, S. D., *English Country Trade with the Philippines* (Quezon City, 1966).

Indian coastal trade and Coromandel's traditional trade around the Bay of Bengal from Burma down to Sumatra formed the basis of Madras's short-haul voyages. Madras ships won a share in the vigorous trade with the Burmese ports, Syriam and Pegu. Gold could be obtained in Burma as well as bulk cargoes of timber and rice. By the early eighteenth century ships were being built there for Europeans under the supervision of resident Englishmen and the trade from Madras had been formed into a joint stock.[29]

Further east at the Thai ports on the Bay of Bengal, Tenasserim and Mergui, English traders encountered the very dynamic trading organization of the king of Siam. In the late seventeenth century the king appointed Europeans to manage his ports and to organize a considerable trading and war fleet.[30] Madras ships also went to the Siamese king's ports on the Gulf of Siam. In 1718 a private agreement was signed at Ayuthia promising favourable treatment for Madras ships.[31] Tonkin was also periodically included in Madras's trade.

Along the Straits of Malacca Madras ships went in large numbers to the Dutch settlement at Malacca, to Malay ports like Kedah and above all to Acheh which had resolutely preserved its independence from the Dutch. In 1687 no less than fourteen ships were recorded as having left Madras for Acheh.[32] In these ports piece goods and Bengal opium, where the Dutch did not interfere, could be sold and tin, pepper, gold and goods imported by Chinese junks could be obtained in return. Madras ships went to the English settlements in western Sumatra and under stringent restrictions as to the commodities in which they traded, to the Dutch capital at Batavia. Bantam, once the major English factory in southeast Asia and closely linked to Madras was closed by the Dutch in 1682.

The governors of Madras were the greatest private traders there. Several of them made huge fortunes, Elihu Yale and Thomas ('Diamond') Pitt attracting the most attention, but all the governors were heavily

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[27] *Records of Fort St. George: Despatches to England 1711-14* (Madras, 1929) p.40

[28] Ibid., *1727-33* (Madras, 1929) p.18.

[29] Hall, D. G. E., *Early English Intercourse with Burma,* (London, 1928).

[30] Anderson, J., *English Intercourse with Siam in the Seventeenth Century,* (London, 1890).

[31] W. Foster's Introduction to A. Hamilton, *A New Account,* 1, pp.xxx-xxxi.

[32] *Records of Fort St. George: Diary and Consultation Book, 1687* (Madras, 1916).

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involved in trade. Governor Joseph Collet wrote in ~~1714~~ that he had 'shipping to almost all the parts of India; and at home I have laid out twelve thousand pounds in a morning at an outcry [auction]'.[33] The governors were expected to organize 'joint stocks', that is, large syndicates of investors who would buy shares in one or more ships under the governor's management. A large part of the English community were thought to have a stake in Madras's shipping, either as part owners or as lenders on what was called 'respondentia', a loan secured on the cargo of a ship with rates adjusted for the supposed risk and length of the voyage.[34] 'To almost every ship and stock, there are several owners, having each a part suitable to his inclination or estate. ....The women drive as great a trade as the men, with no less judgment.'[35] Thomas Pitt wrote of a particularly rich ship taken by pirates on its way from Madras to the Red Sea in 1707 that there was 'not a man worth a thousand pagodas [some £400] of the Europeans but were concerned therein'.[36]

The English were only a fraction of Madras's trading community in the seventeenth century. In addition to the Tamil and Telugu merchants of Coromandel, the new town attracted Muslims, both those normally resident on the coast and from different parts of India, Jews, Portuguese and the largest Armenian group in any British settlement. The extent to which other communities were involved in English shipping is not easy to estimate. The English records sometimes imply that their own shipping was largely sustained by their own resources: '...the foreign trade is generally carryed on by Europeans in partnership to which they don't [admit] the Black People unless they know them well'.[37] These records also note the comings and goings in and out of Madras of a large volume of shipping operated by other communities and contain many complaints about the competition they offered. The Armenians were particularly feared on the Manila trade and the Portuguese, because of their links with Macao, on the China trade. It would seem that Madras did indeed have more non-British shipping than was the case in either Bombay or Calcutta. Nevertheless, the communities co-operated together as well as competing against one another. Europeans invested in the ships of the 'black merchants' of neighbouring San Thome,[38] while British shipping was financed by loans from Indians and Armenians. It was only credit with Indian merchants 'that enables many people to carry on the trade they do having often more at sea than they themselves are worth.'[39]

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[33] *The Private Letter Books of Joseph Collet,* ed. H. H. Dodwell (London, 1933), p.143.

[34] For a fuller explanation, see Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes,* pp.70-1.

[35] Lockyer, *An Account of the Trade,* pp.16-17.

[36] Letter to J. Dolben, 7 Sept. 1707, British Library, Add. MS 22850, fn 50.

[37] *Records of Fort St. George. Despatches to England, 1701/2-1710/11* (Madras, 1925), p.28.

[38] *Records of Fort St. George. Diary and Consultation Book, 1696* (Madras, 1921), p.25.

[39] Cited in Watson, *Foundation for Empire,* p.240n.

Madras's great days as a port for inter-Asian trade began in the 1660's and by the 1730's Madras's shipping was in decline. Although there was to be a recovery later in the century, Madras was never again to be the leading English port. In 1732, the Council complained that the English only had four or five ships,[40] while in the 1730's Madras merchants were said to have made 'losses upon losses'.[41] Madras's difficulties certainly reflect political disruption and famine on the Coromandel coast.[42] They also reflect generally hostile conditions at Acheh, the most important of Madras's southeast Asian markets. Beyond that, however, Madras's decline seems to have been in part a direct consequence of the rise of Calcutta.

In the late seventeenth century the East India Company's factors and even some free merchants had begun to trade on their own behalf from the Bengal ports of Hooghly and Balasore. The English in Bengal had been the junior partners of the much more opulent Madras merchants, taking shares in the Madras joint stocks as much as owning ships of their own. With the establishment of a separate English settlement at Calcutta in the 1690's more ships began to be operated from Bengal. The Calcutta shipowners quickly showed that they intended to bring under their own control much of the trade between Madras and western India, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, which depended on Bengal textiles and sugar to a large degree. The Madras English complained that their colleagues in Calcutta cut them out by preventing them from getting access either to Asian freight or to Bengal goods at a competitive price.[43] Whatever the truth of their allegations, Madras's trade to the western Indian Ocean fell markedly from the 1720's and Bengal ships began to compete with Madras ones in Burma, Malaya, Sumatra and even at Manila, though not at Chinese ports until later in the century.

Bengal was an area of great importance in Asian trade. It exported a much larger range of indigenous commodities in far greater quantities than did the Coromandel ports. In addition to a large variety of cotton textiles, Bengal exported silk, opium, rice and sugar. Political conditions in Bengal were generally much more favourable to trade than they were on the Coromandel coast. A comparatively strong and unified Bengal under virtually independent Nawabs emerged early in the eighteenth century. Bengal attracted many other traders apart from the British. Much of Bengal's very valuable trade with western India was handled by Gujarati shipowners, mostly based at Surat, whose activities were expanding up to 1700. Arab and Armenian ships took Bengal's exports further east, Mughal aristocrats and Hindu merchants traded to the ports in Burma, Thailand, Malaya and Sumatra which were also frequented by Coromandel shipping.[44] Dutch, Portuguese and later French trade was also vigorous.

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[40] *Records of Fort St. George. Despatches to England, 1727-33*, p.104.

[41] Gill, C., *Merchants and Mariners of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1961), p.122.

[42] Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and East India Company*, p.252.

[43] Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*, p.66.

Formidable as this competition must have been, English private shipping won a commanding position on virtually all routes from Bengal by the 1720's: a Calcutta based fleet, numbering some twenty ships around 1715, almost doubled in the 1720's and 1730's.[45] A rough distinction can perhaps be made between long-distance, high cost and potentially high profit voyages and shorter hauls with a quick turnover. In the first half of the eighteenth century the main thrust of Bengal's long-distance trade was to the markets in western India, the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea for textiles, silk and sugar. On these routes the Calcutta English largely displaced their compatriots from Madras and the Muslim shipowners of Surat. Lists kept by the British and the Dutch in 1734 and 1735 recorded sixteen private English ships sailing to destinations west of Cape Comorin.[46] To the east, Calcutta ships competed with those of Madras as well as with the Hindu merchants of Bengal, the Portuguese and the Dutch Company. Calcutta's success was less marked here, but markets were won which were to be greatly expanded in the second half of the century.

Calcutta's shipping seems to have been organized in much the same way as that at Madras. The governor was again the leading private merchant, but he appears to have had much less success than his counterpart at Fort St. George in organizing other shipowners and investors into joint stocks. His efforts were repeatedly resisted as undue attempts to ensure that he and his senior colleagues kept the most lucrative opportunities to themselves. Although the governor and the council were able to set up a large joint stock enterprise, involving several 'freight ships', many smaller partnerships and individually owned ships operated from Calcutta. As at Madras, involvement in shipping was extended over a wide section of the European community by the almost universal habit of borrowing on respondentia. Again as at Madras, members of Asian trading communities had an interest in European shipping. It would seem indeed that they were rather more closely involved in Calcutta than at Madras. At Madras the English frequently complained about the competition offered to their own ships by those of the Armenians and others resident there; at Calcutta the complaints were about the 'Moors' of Surat and the French, but relatively little was said about the small number of Hindu or Armenian ships recorded as being based at Calcutta. On the other hand, there are plentiful indication of Indians lending money to Europeans on respondentia and some instances of their having shares in European ships. The whole trading community of Calcutta, 'white and black', were said to be concerned in a single ship for the Red Sea in the 1730's.[47]

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[44] Prakash, Om, 'Asian Trade and European Impact: A Study of the Trade from Bengal 1630-1720' in Kling and Pearson (eds.), *The Age of Partnership* (Honolulu, 1979), pp.49-55.

[45] Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*, p.55.

[46] Ibid., p.85.

Calcutta overtook Madras as a major trading port early in the eighteenth century, and when Madras was in difficulties in the 1720's and 1730's, Calcutta was still buoyant. Yet over the next two decades Calcutta too ran into hard times. The number of ships based there fell below the high totals earlier in the century and complaints of poor returns were very widespread.

Calcutta's most important markets in Gujarat, Yemen, Iraq and Iran were all suffering disruption due to war and internal conflict. Furthermore, the stability of Bengal itself, which had lasted for several decades, began to crack in the 1740's. A stark picture is painted in a recent assessment: 'The Maratha invasions and Alivardi Khan's pressing financial needs began to push the economy of Bengal towards the brink of a general collapse'.[48] Recovery was to come for the Calcutta shipowners in the 1760's when the British themselves were to impose their own stability on Bengal and new markets were to be won, in the east for the most part rather than in the west.

English private trade in Asia probably began at Surat, either in voyages to Bantam or in attempts to win a stake in the very rich carrying trade to the Persian Gulf. Yet English shipping based on the ports of western India grew much more slowly than it did either in Bengal or on the Coromandel coast. Bombay became a considerably large town under direct British authority, but it did not play the role of Madras or Calcutta. Private English shipping at Bombay or at Surat remained limited in numbers and made little impact on the great volume of seaborne trade to and from western India which was handled by Asian ships. Bombay ceased to be a 'commercial failure'[49] only after Surat, the home port of the major part of the Asian trading fleets, had been damaged beyond repair in the 1720's and 1730's.[50] Perhaps with a touch of special pleading, Surat servants asked the directors of the East India Company what difference 'a small private tradeing' could possibly make in markets 'frequented by all the merchants of India, in comparission of whose trade both yours and the Hollanders is inconsiderable'?[51]

However adverse the circumstance, the governors of Bombay tried to emulate those of Fort St. George and Fort William and to make their own and other peoples' fortunes through trading by sea. Some success was no doubt achieved from Bombay and Surat, where a few English free merchants even shook off their British allegiance to live under Mughal protection, and at the factories to the south on the Malabar coast, Anjengo and Tellicherry. The obstacles were, however, formidable. Study of the papers of one of the governors of Bombay, Robert Cowan, suggests that he had relatively little success in making inroads into Surat's trade, especially that to the Red Sea, in the face of intense competition from Indian shipowners.[52] The private traders of Bombay complained, like their colleagues in Madras, that Calcutta Company servants effectively prevented them from any large participation in the very lucrative trade between Bengal and Gujarat. Madras proved more accommodating in arranging joint ventures to China with Bombay. Governor Boone of Bombay organized joint stocks for two China ships in 1716.[53] Bombay did not, however, become closely linked to China through the export of cotton until the 1717's. In the late 1720's the Bombay servants wrote that they now had 'no large ships of their own' and 'no large capitalls to enable them to build large ships'.[54]

By the end of the seventeenth century, although most British country trade sailed in the Indian-built ships owned by individual Englishmen living in Asian ports, some inter-Asian trade was still being carried on the East India Company's own ships from Europe. Before returning to Britain, ships were sometimes instructed to take cargo on the Company's behalf from one Asian port to another. More commonly the Company's ships were let out for freight on country voyages. Private ships from Britain also took some part in inter-Asian trade. Such ships could either be illegal 'interlopers', sailing in defiance of the Company's monopoly, or the few so-called 'separate stock' ships which were licensed at the end of the seventeenth century and in the early years of the eighteenth. Private ships which came out from Europe either legally or illegally usually aimed at making a profitable return voyage, but they also indulged in port-to-port trading when it seemed advantageous to them. Interesting selection of papers concerning two private ventures, licensed early in the eighteenth century specifically for country trading, have been printed. The records of Thomas Bowrey [55] and John Scattergood[56] throw much light on the world of the private trader in Asia.

The early phases of private English shipping in Asia, whether the ships were based on the Coromandel or the west coast of India, or in Bengal, or whether they came out from Britain, have certain features in common. From home ports largely under British control English ships won a stake in the commerce of major Indian trading regions, their fortunes tending to wax and wane as the trade of that region grew or contracted: Madras grew from the 1660's into the 1720's; Calcutta flourished from the turn of the century into the 1740's; the English at Surat and later at Bombay were early in the field but their progress was restricted until late in the eighteenth century, when new phases of growth were also under way at Madras and Calcutta. In these new phases private English shipowners were to some extent insulated from the vagaries of a purely Asian trading world by catering more and more for the needs of other Englishmen. In the first phases, however, their ships for the most part carried Asian freights or goods destined for Asian buyers.

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[47] Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*, p.85.

[48] Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and East India Company*, p.308.

[49] Ibid., p.49.

[50] Das Gupta, A.,*Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat c. 1700-1750* (Wiesbaden, 1979).

[51] Forster, W. (ed.), *English Factories in India 1651-4* (Oxford, 1915), p.88.

[52] Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants*, pp.168-70, 202-3.

[53] *Scattergoods and the East India Company*, p.155.

[54] Letter to Directors, 25 July 1729, Indian Office Records, E/4/460, p.259.

[55] *The Papers of Thomas Bowrey*, ed. R. C. Temple (London, 1927).

[56] *The Scattergoods and the East India Company*.

If the English private shipowner was part of the Asian trading world, the nature of his relations with the Asian world is open to question. Were Asian merchants generally his allies or his opponents? Were his gains made at their expense? For the great majority of Asian traders the English shipowner must have been friend rather than foe. Since till then they rarely penetrated into the internal economy of the regions where they operated, Englishmen can have been no threat to Asian merchants who produced goods for export or who handled them on their way to the ports. To the extent that they increased the demand for goods and provided extra shipping space, the presence of the English may have been positively beneficial. Asians at the ships' destinations who dealt in imported goods presumably also benefited from the increased supply brought by the English ships. Money could be profitably invested in English shipping and profitable employment gained as brokers, banians, *dubashes* or dealers in ships' stores and provisions.

For the Asian merchant who was himself a shipowner the situation might, however, be rather different. Would there always be sufficient cargo to provide a living both for him and for the Englishmen? Were the markets overseas always big enough to absorb his goods as well as those of the English? For much of the seventeenth century at least, the answer to both questions may in general terms perhaps be 'yes'. Moreover, recent analysis is tending to suggest that when some groups of Asian shipowners did reduce their operations at the end of the century, their reasons for doing so had little to do with European competition.

The tribulations undergone by the Surat merchants have been examined in great detail by Professor Das Gupta. He shows how conditions turned against the Indian shipowners in the early eighteenth century as the Marathas cut off their markets and sources of supply inland, as war ravaged Iran and Yemen, and finally as property and life became increasingly insecure in the city itself. Only when their Indian counterparts were drastically weakened by this catalogue of disaster did the English influence on western Indian trade begin to grow.[57] The English in Madras were certainly to benefit from the decline of Masulipatnam, but they did not cause that decline, which was brought about by the Mughal conquest of Golconda.[58] For reasons yet to be explained, but which can hardly have anything to do with the English, the Mughal aristocrats who had been important shipowners in seventeenth century Bengal withdrew from trading at the end of the century,[59] leaving the field clear for the English.

It would seem therefore that the English private trader was not a real threat to the Asian shipowner during the trade expansion of the seventeenth century and that the early eighteenth century would have been difficult times for Asian ships whether the Englishman was offering his services in competition with them or not. Yet it is precisely the qualities of the services which the English offered which may have turned them into dangerous competitors in times of contraction. At a high price English shipping offered the Asian merchant greater certainty of speedy delivery and some degree of security from interference. With contracting markets threatened by political upheaval, promptness and security were commodities worth paying for. The English found the first half of the eighteenth century a difficult period too, but the fact that they were able to prosper and expand their business for a significantly longer period than the Asians suggests that they were able to take over some of what otherwise would have been available for Asians. For instance, Professor Das Gupta notes that the shipowners of Surat seemed to be unable to recover the losses they were suffering in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea by increased trade with the still stable Bengal or further east.[60] Part of the explanation for this may well be that their opportunities were becoming seriously restricted by the dominant position in the Bengal–Gujarat trade secured by the English ships from Calcutta.[61] All Asian ships appear to have been losing ground in southeast Asia and China to British ships from Madras and Calcutta in the early eighteenth century.[62]

Competition between Asian and English shipping may have become sharper in the difficult conditions of the early eighteenth century, but to stress competition in any overall assessment of the first phases of English private trading would be a distortion. The vitality of inter-Asian trade in the seventeenth century enabled the English fleets to come into existence. The satisfying of Asian needs was their *raison d'être*. Contraction may have given the English increased opportunities, but contraction of Asian trade beyond a certain level would bring the English down too. Asian merchants were only in a very superficial sense their competitors. The European stake in Asia needed to be very much greater than it had been up to the middle

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[57] *Indian Merchants*, p.17.

[58] *Supra*, p.117.

[59] Prakash, 'Asian Trade and European Impact', *Age of Partnership*, pp.54-5.

[60] *Indian Merchants*, p.139.

[61] Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*, p.79.

[62] Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and East India Company*, pp.198-9.

of the eighteenth century for the European private trader to be able to emancipate himself from his dependence on the Asian merchant.

The great Anglo-French wars of the mid-eighteenth century further dislocated trade that was already in serious difficulties; Madras suffered particularly severely. Out of the wars, however, a new order was to emerge that was to place private trade on a very much firmer basis: the British became the actual rulers of Bengal; they were the dominant power on most of the Coromandel coast and they strengthened their position in western India. Both the scale of British activities and the extent to which the British were able to control resources were enormously increased. As a result private British shipping began to be drawn out of the Asian networks within which it had previously operated into new British ones.

The most spectacular increase in the scale of British activities and in their control of resources occurred in Bengal. Calcutta grew prodigiously in the late eighteenth century, while British soldiers, administrators, and traders, both on the Company's behalf and on their own, fanned out over the province. With the winning of political power, control over many of the commodities which gave Bengal such a commanding place in Asian trade passed into British hands. Englishmen in and out of the Company's service directly managed the output of a considerable part of Bengal's piece goods, as well as many of the filatures which made raw silk. The production of opium was monopolized by the Company but sold in Calcutta for export by private shippers. Private English sugar and indigo works were set up. On a much smaller scale something similar happened on the Coromandel coast. Private trade from Madras, Cuddalore or Vishakhapatnam 'spread its tentacles into various economic avenues', once again the production of piece goods and also the rice trade.[63] On the west coast the British took over the port of Surat in 1759 and extended their rule over much of the Malabar coast in the 1790's. The private traders were therefore able to strengthen their hold on Malabar's pepper and spice production and, from a less secure base until very late in the century, to increase their stake in Gujarat cotton.[64] The establishment of a British colony at Penang in 1786 gave private merchants a new settlement on the Malayan coast. The private trade from the old settlement of Bencoolen in west Sumatra began to grow from the 1760's. Private traders even established themselves illegally at Canton.

The number of private ships based at Asian ports grew very rapidly indeed, especially after the ending of the War of the Amercian Revolution in 1783. Calcutta consolidated its position as the most important British trading settlement which it had won in the early eighteenth century. In 1793, 575 private English ships were said to have cleared in and out of its port.[65] Assuming that each ship used the port once in the year, this supposes that some 290 ships called there. Since many ships trading, for instance, between Calcutta and Madras or Calcutta and Burma made up to four voyages in a year, the total must be substantially reduced, but it is still an impressive one. In 1802 Calcutta's home fleet was said to consist of 77 vessels with a total tonnage of 28,000 tons.[66] Bombay had built up a trading fleet of 66 private ships of all sizes by 1792[67] and was overtaking Madras in its commercial importance. Apart from the East India Company's own vessels, 147 three-masted ships called at Madras in 1796-7.[68] Shipbuilding to meet the new European demand flourished at its traditional centres in Gujarat and in Burma. By the middle of the eighteenth century it had spread to Bombay, where a dynasty of extremely able Parsi shipbuilders became established. From the 1780's Calcutta too became a shipbuilding centre, 77 vessels being launched there between 1781 and 1802.[69]

The organization behind these greatly increased fleets became much more sophisticated. In the seventeenth or the early eighteenth centuries the characteristic pattern of shipowning was the joint stock or small partnership with the senior Company servants very prominently involved and with additional finance raised by loans on respondentia from European and Asian investors. In the late eighteenth century the ownership of a large part of the private shipping had been assumed by institutions in the Indian ports called houses of agency. These were much more formal and durable bodies than the old joint stocks or partnerships. The partners in the agency houses were usually men outside the Company's service. They raised their capital from the substantial savings of army officers or civil servants. Apart from acting as agents on commission for business of all kinds (which gave them their name), the houses of agency owned ships and plantations. Agency partnerships appeared in Bengal in the 1770's, multiplying there and at Madras, Bombay and Penang with the expansion of trade from the 1780's. By the end of the century some firms, especially those in Calcutta were very large. Fairlie, Fergusson and Company owned nine ships of over 400 tons; Bruce Fawcett and Company of Bombay owned five.[70] Marine insurance companies sprang up at the major settlements.

The degree to which other communities were involved in the great expansion of private English shipping in the later eighteenth century appears to have varied from port to port. At the end of the eighteenth

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[63] Arasaratnam, S., 'Trade and Political Dominion in South India, 1750-90', *Modern Asian Studies*, 13 (1979), pp.37-8.

[64] Nightingale, P., *Trade and Empire in Western India 1784-1806* (Cambridge, 1970).

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[65] *Remarks on the Present State of the Husbandry and Commerce of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1795), p.155.

[66] Bengal Commercial Letter, 21 Mar. 1803, British Library, Add MS. 13434, ff.8-9.

[67] Furber, *John Company at Work*, p.244.

[68] Love, H. D., *Vestiges of Old Madras* (London, 1913), 3, p.497.

[69] Milburn, W., *Oriental Commerce* (London, 1813), 2, p.174.

[70] Parkinson, C. N., *Trade in the Eastern Seas 1793-1813* (Cambridge, 1937), pp.336, 343.

century only some five per cent of Calcutta's registered ships of over 80 tons were in Indian names.[71] On the other hand, the agency houses presumably drew a considerable proportion of the funds they used to finance shipping from Indian sources and most of them had Banians associated with them in their shipping work. The picture of Madras is unclear. Even if Europeans had made inroads into trades previously dominated by Asians, at least a part of the once vigorous Asian shipping from Madras and the Coromandel ports seems still to have been operating in the late eighteenth century.[72] At Bombay there can be no doubt about the vitality of the Asian contribution to the port's trade. The Parsis had become major shipowners in their own right and each of the European houses was said to have 'one of the principal Persi merchants concerned with them in most of their foreign speculations'.[73] Hindu, Muslim and Armenian merchants also conducted much trade from Bombay.

In its early phases English private trade had grown up within an existing pattern of Asian trade. The pattern of the new phase of later eighteenth century owed much more to European needs. The great arteries of trade now ran between the British settlements. Trade with Madras in 'grain, pulse, sugar, saltpetre, ...spirits, provisions etc.' was described as 'the home trade' of Calcutta, giving 'employ to the greater portion of our home tonnage'. In 1793 some 80,000 tons of cargo were carried from Bengal to the Coromandel coast.[74] War in southern India in the 1790's gave business to the shipowners of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay as they transported and supplied the huge armies involved.

India's traditional markets in the western Indian Ocean, which had proved so precarious by mid-century, were largely relinquished by the British to Asian traders at the end of the eighteenth century. Arabs from Muscat and Indians from Bombay took the major share of the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and east African trades. Interest in markets to the eastward, however, ran at a very high level among the British traders at all the Indian ports. In part this increased eastern trade involved dealing with Europeans: the English at Penang, the Dutch at Batavia, the Spanish at Manila, and above all the English East India Company at Canton with its need for funds with which to purchase tea. But eastern trade was still an enterprise which depended heavily on Asian merchants, be they Chinese, Malays or Bugis, and their willingness and ability to purchase Indian commodities and to supply tin, pepper, gold, sugar, drugs or spices in return. Thus it

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[71] Bhattacharya, S., 'A Note on Indian Participation in Shipping Business in Calcutta, 1800-30', Indian History Congress, 39th Session (1978), 2, p.764.

[72] Arasaratnam, S., 'Trade and Political Dominion', *Modern Asian Studies*, 13, p.37. H. Furber, 'Madras in 1787', *Essays in Modern English History in Honor of Wilbur Cortez Abbott* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), p.271.

[73] Milburn, *Oriental Commerce*, 1, p.171.

[74] *Remarks on Husbandry and Commerce*, pp.161-3.

retained many of the characteristics of 'traditional' Asian trade. It was 'a commerce of speculation and adventure' which 'vibrates to the extremes of large profit and ruinous loss'.[75]

The accelerating flow of trade to the eastward began in the 1760's with the ending of the wars. In the first half of the eighteenth century the Dutch at Malacca recorded at the most ten English private ships passing east through the Straits in any one year. In 1764, 24 such ships came through; in 1774 there were 50.[76] At the same time more ships were going through the Sunda Straits. All the Indian settlements and Bencoolen were involved in the expanding eastern trade which was a direct consequence of British victories. The new wealth of the Company and of individuals was funnelled from India to Britian through the China trade, while much larger quantities of opium, piece goods and raw cotton were now available for export to the east. At the same time the British in Asia became much more assertive in their dealings with the Dutch, whose vulnerability both to British encroachment and to Asian refusal to accept trade restrictions was becoming more and more apparent.

China was the goal of many eastern voyages. Import from Indian country ships at Canton in 1785-6 were worth twice as much as those in an average year between 1774 and 1782; by 1797-8 they had nearly trebled again. Of these ships six out of ten were likely to be from Bombay with two each from Calcutta and Madras.[77] The spectacular growth in private trade between India and China had been made possible by the steep rise in the East India Company's purchases of tea at Canton, especially after the sweeping reduction of the tea duties in 1784 boosted its sales in Britain. The Company paid for a large part of its tea by giving the managers of country voyages bills of exchange on London in return for the specie earned in Canton by the sale of their ships' cargoes. With the prospect of bills on London the owners of country ships had no difficulty in attracting loans to finance their China voyages for men in India with money to send home to Britain.

Voyages to China stimulated trade with southeast Asia. The Indian country ships exported much raw cotton from western India to China, hence the prominence of Bombay in the trade, as well as increasing quantities of Bengal opium. For many of them, however, Indian commodities needed to be supplemented by items such as tin and pepper, collected *en route* to China in Sumatra or Malaya. Consequently more and more English ships called at Kedah and Selangor in western Malaya, at Trengganu on the eastern side of the peninsula, and at the new port opened by sultan of Johor on Riau island, which became for a time 'the general mart for the junks and ships bound to China'.[78] Some English ships sailed directly to Banka island off Sumatra, the main source of tin, which was officially a Dutch monopoly.

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[75] Ibid., p.184.

[76] Lewis, D.,'The Growth of the Country Trade to the Straits of Malacca 1760-77', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 43, (1970), p.117.

[77] Pritchard, E. H., *The Crucial Years of Anglo-Chinese Relations 1750-1800* (Washington, 1936), p.175.

Goods for China were, however, only one of the lures which brought the country ships into the eastern seas. Trade throughout the archipelago was valuable in itself. In the 1760's the Madras merchants came back to Acheh, traditionally one of their most important markets. For few years a very ambitious syndicate from Madras maintained a highly privileged position at Acheh with their own 'factory' and a force of armed sepoys. The Bengal traders carried their opium and piece goods to Malaya, Acheh and other parts of Sumatra, Borneo, Sulu and even on occasions to the Moluccas and New Guinea. Bencoolen ships also probed the limits of Dutch tolerance far to the east. Batavia was frequently visited by ships from all the Indian presidencies. In theory only the Dutch Company was permitted to handle certain commodities such as opium, but in reality the English private traders could sell opium illegally and buy spices.[79] The failure to enforce regulations even in Batavia was indicative of Dutch weakness in general. Chinese junks and Indonesian *praus*, especially those of the Bugis, freely defied Dutch restrictions on trading with other Europeans. Thus the British were able to trade with areas formally closed to them through intermediaries, who came to ports outside Dutch influence or even to British Penang. Bugi ships were said to bring gold to Penang from as far afield as Bali and Timor and to exchange it for Indian textiles and opium.[80] Dutch efforts to reassert their influence in the Straits of Malacca in the 1780's enabled them to close down Riau but gave them no more than temporary respite. The British in India were now much too strong for them. In times of peace, British traders probed their weakness; in war, British expeditions took their settlements.[81]

The Spanish at Manila were equally vulnerable to Britain's new power in India. In time of war they too were invaded. In normal times, however, the Spanish were more flexible, reforming their commercial system and incidentally creating more opportunities for English trade. In 1785 Manila was opened to direct trade with Spain in addition to the old galleon trade with America across the Pacific. To obtain goods for Spain the new Royal Philippines Company entered into contracts with British merchants to supply them with Indian textiles. Liberalization was carried a stage further in 1789 when foreign European ships were permitted to come to Manila openly without old disguises of Portuguese or Asian colours. Lists of ships for the 1790's show a marked increase in English trade to Manila from India.[82]

At the end of the eighteenth century British private traders brought Australia into their orbit and even sent their ships to England on the rare occasions that this was permitted. Their operations now spanned the world. What determined their success or failure were no longer such considerations as the solvency of the Banians of Surat or the good disposition of the Imam of Yemen. They now had to contend with the European powers' world wars and with the state of the European market for tea or for indigo. They had ceased to be merely part of a narrowly Asian trading system. If there was such a thing as a world economy at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were part of that.

Bibliographical Note.

Scholarly interest in private British activities in Asia before 1800 is a relatively recent development and specific studies of the topic are still few and far between. Much material on the private English dimension can, however, be found in the many valuable studies of European trade in general in Asia which have been appearing in recent years. The most comprehensive of such studies is Holden Furber's *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800* (Minneapolis, 1976). Furber has dealt with English private activity at the end of the eighteenth century, while setting it in its general European context in his *John Company at Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1948). For an earlier period I. B. Watson's *Foundation for Empire: English Private Trade in India 1659-1760* (New Delhi, 1980), provides a full-length study, devoted solely to the English and largely concerned with developments in India. Chapter 9 of K.N. Chaudhuri's massively authoritative *The Trading World of Asia and the East India Company 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 1978), surveys English involvement in Asian 'country' trade over the same time span. C.N. Parkinson's *Trade in the Eastern Seas 1793-1813* (Cambridge, 1937), also has a chapter on the country trade which deals with a later period than that covered in Furber's *John Company*.

Studies of private trade with a regional emphasis are almost entirely confined to the eighteenth century. For western India, Holden Furber's *Bombay Presidency in the Mid-eighteenth Century* (Bombay, 1965) can be followed by Pamela Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India*

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[78] Clodd, H. P., *Malaya's First British Pioneer* (London, 1948), p.157.

[79] Elmore, H. M., *The British Mariner's Directory and Guide to the Trade and Navigation of the Indian and China Seas* (London, 1802), pp.48-50.

[80] Bastin, J., 'Historical Sketch of Penang in 1794', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 32, (1959), p.9.

[81] Much has been written on British commercial penetration of southeast Asia in the late eighteenth century. See especially D. K. Bassett, *British Trade and Policy in Indonesia and Malaysia in the late Eighteenth Century*, (Zug, 1971); J. Warren, 'Balambangan and the Rise of the Sulu Sultanate', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1 (1977), pp.73-93; Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes*, pp.100-4.

[82] Cheong, W.E. 'Changing the Rules of the Game (The India-Manila Trade 1785-1809)', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, i (1970) pp.1-19.

1784-1806 (Cambridge, 1970). P.J. Marshall devotes two chapters of his *East Indian Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1976), to private trade by sea from Calcutta down to 1784. Later developments are described in A. Tripathi, *Trade and Finance in the Bengal Presidency 1793-1833,* new edn. (Calcutta, 1979). English private enterprise on the Coromandel coast has not yet attracted a study specifically devoted to it. Useful material will, however, be found in Watson, *Foundation for Empire* and Furber, *John Company*. It is to be hoped that valuable articles by S. Arasaratnam, such as his 'Indian Commercial Groups and European Traders, 1600-1800', *South Asia, 1* (1978) or 'Trade and Political Dominion in South India 1750-90', *Modern Asian Studies*, xiii (1979), are the forerunners of a longer work.* The role of the private traders in increased British activity in southeast Asia at the end of the eighteenth century is discussed in some of D. K. Bassett's essays in *British Trade and Policy in Indonesia and Malaysia in the late Eighteenth Century* (Zug, 1971). The importance of private trade for Britain's relations with China has long been appreciated. Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China 1800-41* (Cambridge, 1951), is the classic account. Much additional information will be found in L. Dermigny, *La Chine et l'occident: le commerce à Canton au xviiie siècle,* 3 vols., (Paris, 1964).

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* (S. Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromondel Coast 1650-1740* (Delhi, 1986)...*Eds.)*

13

Indian Merchants and English Private Interests: 1659-1760

Bruce Watson

From the beginning of English commerce with Asia one of the most critical themes was the problem of private trade. In the early years of the seventeenth century private trade was viewed by the Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies as unwarranted competition. The small trading capital available to the Company, certainly by comparison with the Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie, (VOC) meant that even the slightest alterations in the buying and selling markets adversely affected the Company's profitability. The issue was all the more important because of the desire to maintain the monopoly of East Indian trade, which it purchased from a succession of monarchs and parliaments in the seventeenth century. The substantial profits being made by the Company only increased the irritation experienced among the directors at the effrontery of their servants dabbling for themselves in the East Indian trade.

The essentially profitable nature of the trade attracted people to the Company's service. For men of commercial acumen the salaries they were paid were low, even by contemporary standards. The situation was to improve for the senior servants, but still the attractions of a fast fortune far outweighed the Company's compensations. The problem was to assume mammoth proportions in Bengal during the second half of the eighteenth century, but its character was established early in the seventeeth century. The Company's requirement that its servants sign bonds not to indulge in any private trade nor to invest in or in any way support the private trade of anybody else, was usually ignored on arrival in the East. In 1616 Sir Thomas Roe recognized the problem and he suggested that the Company maintain its prohibitions on private trade, confiscating all goods taken on private accounts to England, while increasing the scale of salaries for servants, so that the attractions of private trade would be diminished. Such an opinion was far too naive, and the private traders continued their efforts despite the Company's proscriptions.

Although the Company did attempt to reorganize its servants' salaries during the Company's reconstruction in 1657, the tensions between the private and corporate interests continued to develop during the seventeenth century. Over time the directors were forced into conceding increasing numbers of indulgences to their servants, permitting them greater amounts and varieties of commodities in private trade. At the same time, the Company attempted to exercise controls on their servants by funnelling the legal private trade to England through the Company's warehouses, and by offering servants a variety of channels through which they could repatriate their estates. For these services the Company levied a number of charges.

These charges and conditions raised the costs to which private trade was subject, while also making the activity relatively complex. Such complexity was increased by the essentially secretive nature of the activity. Englishmen attempted to hide the values of their goods in order to minimize the charges to which they were liable. They attempted to send more goods to England than they were permitted, hoping to evade freight costs by bribing the ships' commanders to declare short-tonnage. Private traders also understated their activities in order to conceal them from the Company and Indian governments. They tried to corner lucrative markets not explored by their competitors, and to prevent Indian associates from discovering the true values of commodities expressed through the differences between prices in India and England. For a historian attempting to reconstruct these activities, the quicksands are more obvious than the beach itself.

Nevertheless, no matter how complex or secret, the motivation behind private trade was obvious. Englishmen went to the East to make a fortune; the quicker the better. Most of them failed or died in the enervating climate. Two aspirants in the seventeenth century were expressive in their disappointment. John Crandon, a young writer at Madras, felt that he had left an 'English Elysium for a heathenish sandhill'. Robert Elwes was of a similar opinion when he found by painful experience that although the name of India sounded marvellously exotic the reality was most disappointing. Even a relatively successful man like William Monson, in the first half of the eighteenth century, frequently had reason to lament the day that he had entered the 'Torrid Zone'. These men, along with many of their colleagues, discovered the truth of the old adage that all was not gold that glittered, whether one sought it at home or in the mysterious East.

However, in spite of the problems, the discomforts, the hazards and frequent disillusionment, Englishmen continued to indenture themselves or their relatives to the Company. So much so that in 1681 the directors could brush aside demands for better salaries with the assertion that for every person they sent abroad they had a hundred more wanting to go and that if any servants abroad did not like the service and allowances they were at liberty to leave them and return to England. The reason for this desire to go to India must have been the belief that there was the opportunity for a rapid accumulation of wealth in so doing. The personnel sent to India was drawn mostly from mercantile families or the lesser gentry. Appointments were dependent on having influential patrons. The duties required men with some education–preferably more than less–so the potential for wealth would have had to have been more than a delusion. Life in the East was dangerous and fraught with hazard to life and property, so to attract relatively intelligent, educated and competent men to risk themselves, fortunes would have to be made often enough to outweigh the risks. This is the fundamental rationale for the private trade. Englishmen went to India in order to attain a fortune substantial enough to purchase and maintain a settled, landed retirement in England, and preferably gained quickly enough to escape the hazards of bankruptcy or fatal illness.

Resident Englishmen were not the only group involved in private trade. Sailors on ships to India liked to augment their wages by trading at the various ports they visited. Smuggling private goods into England was a constant irritation to the directors. However, the most important aspect of this group's activities was the provision of a mechanism through which illicit private trade was sent to England. The Company attempted to prevent smuggling by searching all the ships returning from the East. However, the costs and difficulties involved in discovering and prosecuting offenders forced the directors to change their approach to the problem. By conceding greater amounts of private trade to their employees in the East, and by permitting transfers of wealth by way of bills of exchange drawn on the Company, the directors eventually removed the necessity for smuggling in the Company's shipping.

Another interesting, but insignificant, group was the motley collection of English freemerchants living in the various English settlements. These people were encouraged by the Company to participate in the 'country trade', providing they did not infringe the Company's regulations, and only for as long as they paid all the duties and cesses required by the Company at its settlements. While the Company did not encourage settlement in India by Englishmen as freemen, it recognized that they could play an important, if somewhat minor, role in helping to supply the Company's factories with commodities for shipment to England. The main reason why the number of freemen remained small before the late eighteenth century was the relatively priveleged position Company servants could maintain in the English settlements. The opportunities for a covenanted servant to trade under the Company's treaties and protection were far greater than for independent individuals. This distinction was rigorously observed by the servants in order to strengthen their commercial position and social status in the settlements.

English interlopers added another dimension in the developing relationship between the corporate and private interests. From the Company's point of view, the interloping voyages constituted an attack on its property in the monopoly of eastern trade. The arrival of an interloping vessel, during the forty years (1680's-1720's) that interloping created the most problems, forced the Company to make a number of adjustments in its dealings with Indian merchants. In the marketplace the extra competition strained the Company's ability to supply cash advances to its Indian suppliers. Extra credit had to be extended to merchants in order to forestall the markets and prevent interlopers from obtaining commodities. The Company commenced its dealings with the Indian artisans earlier in the seasons than was usual, having to use more cash than it was used to providing. At the same time, the Company attempted to impose bans on its merchants to prevent them supplying interlopers with goods. Where the Indian merchants relied upon the Company's business, they were threatened with financial penalties and dismissal. Independent Indian merchants were approached with bribes and promises of extra business.

The measures introduced by the Company and the scale of investment necessary for long distance overseas trade combined to undermine the profitability of interloping voyages. The formation of the English East India Company in 1708 absorbed interlopers into official English trade with the East. Some independent English traders invested in the Ostend and Swedish East India Companies in the1720's and1730's, but never really posed a threat to the official English trade in India. The need to respond to the perceived threat of interloping voyages did not have any major effects in the English relationship with Indian merchants. The adjustments made by the Company only occurred with the presence of an interloping vessel, and the more usual conditions within the relationship were quickly re-established when the interlopers were removed.

In the group of private traders, we must include Indian merchants. The merchants concerned here were those who carried on their own business at the same time as they worked for the Company. As such they experienced a similar conflict of interests between their activities on the Company's behalf and their individual aspirations. It was not always the case that what was good for the Company was good for its Indian merchants. The relationship between this group and the Company's resident servants proved to be the most critical for the English corporate interest in India.

At the same time, it is probably wise to emphasize that the references to Indian merchants and their activities in this chapter, related only to those merchants who dealt with the English. During the period 1659 to 1760 there was a vast area of Indian commercial life which never came into contact with the Europeans, let alone with the English. It should be understood that the relationships outlined here are those which can be found in the English records. These records, although voluminous and exciting in their scope and description, were not written under any delusion of objectivity. They argue English viewpoints, and concern themselves with English activities and attitudes in India. As such, inferences about the Indian mercantile experience from such records are limited mainly to India's maritime commerce with Europeans.

Indian merchants were essential middlemen in the European trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is an obvious point, but one which bears emphasis here, because such necessity materially affected both the corporate and private interests in Anglo-Indian commerce. The multiplicity of markets, the diversity of commodities, along with the divergences in commercial practices, and the disparities of monetary values between regions, and the differences in social norms, customs and administrations, all made maritime commerce on the south Asian littoral of the Indian Ocean a morass for unwary Europeans. Moreover, Indian merchants came in many varieties and creeds. For the purpose of analysis we can divide them into two main groups. There were the pedlars and the larger merchants, the latter also engaging in small scale activities according to individual perceptions of profitability. In essence the Indian scene was similar to commercial experience over most of Europe. The crucial distinction, both within Europe and the rest of the world, lay with the development of the joint stock companies, which reached their contemporary apogee in the Dutch and English East India Companies.

There was the admixture of pedlars and larger merchants operating at the different levels in both regions of the world. The purely local markets in Europe had their counterparts in the bazars of Surat, Masulipatnam and Hooghly. The wholesale spot markets and forward markets serving the local trades as well as the larger retail and inter-regional markets also operated in these centres. These last activities were those within which the Europeans were to involve themselves. The major Indian port-cities were not manufacturing centres as such. They were entrepôts, collecting commodities from their hinterlands for distribution elsewhere. This dispersion of production created the basic problems for the English traders. They were separated from the producers by languages, customs and space. Only after they became settled in the ports, and their requirements for particular types of commodities became known, did the English begin to seek ways of dealing more directly with the producers. People have always maintained an ambivalent attitude towards the middleman, and this was even more pertinent for the East India Company. The Company was itself a middleman, in the sense that it bought wholesale goods in India, transported them to England and sold them to the retail trade and colonial transhipping institutions. It continually sought to establish a more direct connection between itself and the producers. In Coromandel and Bengal it was to succeed by the middle of the eighteenth century.

A major part in this progression was played by the private interests, which had begun to take over most of the functions formerly the province of Indian merchants in India's maritime trade, thus forcing those Indian merchants still left in the commerce further down the scale of importance. By the later years of the eighteenth century it was simply the case that Indian merchants were no longer as important as they used to be in Anglo-Indian commerce. A great deal of the process was undertaken by Englishmen. However, during the period under discussion Indian associates were as necessary for private traders as brokers were to the Company, and it is in the realization of this relationship that we can find the essence of the problem for the corporate interest. Any reconstruction of the relationship between Indian merchants and English private traders is immediately confronted by the difficulty of separating the corporate and private interests within it. The Indian merchants who acted for the Company also acted for the private interests while promoting their own interests, in the same way that the English private traders were also acting as the Company's servants. Quite who was acting in which interest in any given circumstance, and who was gaining the most benefit, or experiencing the most detriment, is not always clear from the records. Most functions were common to both areas in greater or lesser degree, depending on the circumstances at various times.

Indian merchants were employed as brokers, interpreters, agents, attorneys, writers, money-changers, cashiers, intermediate brokers, and subcontracting merchants. Some undertook specific tasks while others handled a number. The Company's appointed brokers in the northwest and the 'chief merchants' in the southeast were the most important, and were invariably men of good standing .in the community and of high credit-worthiness. They arranged the Company's sales and purchases in the various areas in which the English maintained factories. They generally organized the flow of money and goods to and from the host of minor merchants who were in direct contact with the producers, and were responsible to the Company for the consignment of the required quantities and qualities of goods at the specified times. The private traders used a similar system with their *banians* and *dubashes* . These men maintained a more personal relationship with their English colleagues. The official Indian merchants, although distanced from the individuals by the structure of the factories' councils which determined the contracts, frequently enjoyed close personal associations with the ranking English servants in their private capacity. Along with the obviously commercial functions, many official merchants acted as intermediaries between the Company and Indian governments.

For their services the Company's Indian merchants were generally paid a commission, based on the value of the transactions they conducted on the Company's behalf. Merchants who performed their tasks well were often rewarded with tokens of the Company's appreciation. There were also merchants who maintained a familial commitment to the Company over two or three generations. On the whole the association between the Indian merchants and the Company was as amicable as any could be between two parties, each trying to maximize their profits. Problems arose when the contracting merchants squeezed the producers too much and the commodities fell short of the required quantity and quality. Cheating the producers was one way the merchants could rake off extra profits by saving on the price paid to the producer. The practice of extorting bribes, and paying in defective coins–subject to discounts on exchange–or poor quality foodstuffs and raw materials, tended to result in the producers returning goods commensurate with their treatment. The resulting disagreements with the Company regarding quality frequently revealed the merchants' activities. The situation was exacerbated when English servants and the Indian merchants colluded to cheat the producers and the Company by pocketing the difference between the stated price of commodities and what the producers actually received.

Conversely, the Company regularly tried to fix prices lower than the merchants could accept. By fiddling about with the proportions of the money advanced to Indian merchants the Company tried to force them to employ more of their own money in the investments, thereby avoiding recurrent problem with bad debts. The issue was not simple since the Company had to sell the goods it imported from Europe. If Indian merchants felt they were receiving a poor deal, they frequently refused to pay the prices set by the Company. One example of the English attempting to overcome such problems and rationalize supplies was the imposition of a joint stock company on the merchants at Madras in the 1680's. This policy led to the impoverishment of many of these merchants during the early years of the eighteenth century. It is significant that it could be implemented only at the settlement where the Company enjoyed effective autonomy and where the Indian merchants were relatively weaker. The policy could not be imposed on the Company's Bengali merchants, and was not even considered in the northwest.

In this fragile equilibrium between the corporate aspirations and those of the Indian merchant-suppliers lay the germ of one of the most critical problems faced by the contending groups. The *dastak* was a certificate given, under the conditions of the various *firmans* and *parwanas,* by the Company to the merchants to pass the Company's goods through the innumerable customs posts and toll barriers. The goods purchased by and from the Company were exempted from transit duties, thus allowing prices to remain attractive for both parties. This was especially important during trading recessions, as such exemptions provided an incentive to Indian merchants to purchase from the Company. By 1681, in Bengal, it was the accepted view that granting *dastaks* in this way was the usual practice, so that people trading with the English would buy the goods only on condition of their being exempt from customs.

Although an eminently sensible commercial precaution, particularly since the Company had paid the Mughal government for its privileges, the process was open to abuse. Local governors did not appreciate the loss of revenue at their tolls, especially when the Indian merchants carrying the goods had only a minimal association with the Company. The interpretations put upon the *parwanas* permitting 'English' goods to travel free of transit duties was open to debate, and created many difficult situations. This was more critical when the goods being protected by *dastaks* were not the Company's but belonged to the private interests. During the first half of the eighteenth century the Company was aware of the problems, sending no less than 25 standing orders to its settlements in Bengal prohibiting the issue of *dastaks* on private goods. Such prohibitions fell on unresponsive ears, not only in Bengal but also on the northwestern littoral. Here similar collusion between Indian merchants and the private interests over passes ran riot. When Hyder Quli Khan, governor of Surat in 1724, began to insist upon distinguishing between the Company's commodities and those of its servants, the Company recognized the danger of its being connected with the practice of diminishing the Mughal revenues. At the same time, the directors realized that their servants would continue to act in their own interests, and suggested that judiciously placed bribes would prove helpful. The directors also hoped that the new governor would take a less rigorous view. Being unable to prevent the illicit use of passes, or effectively to discipline their servants, forced the directors into assisting their servants even though the Company's regulations had been contravened; all this to protect an English commerce within which the distinctions between corporate and private interest had become blurred.

Issuing passes to cover goods transacted by the Company became a profitable enterprise for English servants. The passes became convertible, in that they were sold to Indian merchants irrespective of whose goods were being transported. Englishmen, and particularly ranking servants, had few scruples when it came to issuing passes to cover their own goods, nor did they worry about the legitimacy of selling passes to their Indian associates to cover goods which had no connection with the English commerce.

Association between the Company's Indian merchants and Englishmen assumed greater significance the higher the rank of the servant. The collaboration of Sir Edward Winter, governor of Fort St George, with Beri Timmanna at Madras during the1660's, and William Blake's administration in Bengal between 1662 and 1668, were examples of how unscrupulous men could exercise power to their own profit. At Surat in the mid-1660's, Bhimji Parak reportedly used his privileged association with the English president, Sir George Oxenden, to transact all the Company's business, and control every Indian merchant involved in the Company's investment in the northwest. Similar situations prevailed in Madras and Bengal during the early eighteenth century. It was distressingly common in the English settlement for weak or acquisitive senior servants to be accused of permitting their Indian associates to act rapaciously. Sometimes, as with Francis Hastings and his *dubash,* Krishnama, at Madras, the activities were so offensive that the directors accused the Hastings administration of giving the English government a stink of corruption in the nostrils of Madras's Indian neighbours.Hastings was dismissed in October 1721, and his Indian associates, Krishnama and Venkatapati were brought to task in the hope that such action would in future discourage all instances of oppression.

Problems caused by ranking servants abusing their authority in order to wring as much profit as quickly as possible continued to trouble the Company. The concern was heightened by this sort of collusion conflicting with the Company's stated objectives of attracting Indian merchants of English settlements, by establishing the institutional rule of law, which protected life, limb and property. Unfortunately, temptation could always find flaws in the best of intentions. It is clear that collaboration and collusion was rarely in the Company's interest, and one of the difficulties is that of attempting to enforce the analytical distinctions. The Company's servants exploited their positions to the utmost in their pursuit of wealth, so the distinction between servant as servant, and the servant as private trader tends to become unworkable. However, the attractions for the Indian merchants were clearly in the opportunities for power and profit, gained from collaborating with as senior a servant as possible.

For the Englishmen the greatest profits were to be made in transacting the commodities reserved by the Company for the corporate trade. In the legal private trade between regions in the East there were substantial profits to be made on occasion, but during the period to 1760 it is as well to remember that most of the enterprises were small and individualized. Englishmen in their private trade operated on the line between the peddling and wholesale markets. The Company tolerated the peddling trade of its servants, but for obvious reasons disliked ventures which operated in the wholesale markets. During the period we are examining the principle of 'little and often' was the normal procedure, rather than a series of spectacular investments. Nevertheless, it was also true that the more senior the servant the greater were his opportunities and the more extensive was his private trade. When servants accumulated a large capital investment their activities shifted into the wholesale markets, where they competed directly with the Company and Indian merchants concerned with the maritime trades.

Whether operating in the peddling or wholesale markets, English private traders had to finance their activities. The low salaries paid to servants generally did not form a large enough trading capital for most servants, who looked for other sources. The fortunate men had relatives in England who could send out capital, but this was strictly regulated and policed by the Company. Less scrupulous men, with the opportunities enjoyed by rank, stole or 'borrowed' money from the Company's cash. Others borrowed from Indian merchants. This again was irregular and frequently created problems for the Company, since, in most cases, the Company's credit was used to secure the loans. Any failure to repay was then laid at the Company's door. The identification of Englishmen with the Company resulted in claims against the Company for loans taken out by servants on their personal accounts. Where the Englishmen concerned died their Indian creditors frequently demanded repayment from the Company. The Company found such claims repugnant, especially when they received support from local Indian governments. The necessity to maintain amicable relationships with Indian governments and merchants always cost the Company money, either in repayment of the debts or in the presents and bribes required by the governors to ignore the claims.

Borrowing from Indian merchants was often essential if servants were to drive a trade on their own. Any checks of the Indian merchant's ability to lend money were regarded as infringements of the personal liberty of English servants. At Madras, in 1726, the English residents complained that governor James Macrae's oppressive administration discouraged the merchants from revealing their true wealth by way of loans to Englishmen. This they considered a great hardship, for credit with the Indian merchants enabled many people to carry on a private trade, and they often had more at sea than they were actually worth. Alternatively, ranking English servants could use their positions to demand loans from the merchants. All of it directly ignored the Company's proscriptions against its servants borrowing money from Indian merchants. The activities continued, leaving little doubt that debts incurred by Englishmen in their private trade were often critical in upsetting the local equilibrium of the Company's relationship with the merchants.

Indian associates in the private trade were also used to safeguard English goods. On a notable occasion at Masulipatnam during the seventeenth century, the discredited William Jearsey attempted to protect his estate against the Company's claims on him by depositing his goods with eminent local merchants. The attempt to impress the council at Fort St George with his poverty failed when the ploy was discovered. In similar vein Indian associates sometimes negotiated with local Indian governors to protect their principal's activities from the Company's interference.

This was part of the general commercial environment of which the private interests operated, reflecting in many ways the structure

of the corporate trade. At a more personal level of activity, Indian merchants transferred money to and from different regions in India for their English associates. The reputations of the merchants concerned underwrote the transfers. The transactions could be quite complicated. In June 1670, John Vickers and William Bagnold drew a bill of exchange for Rs 600, through their Indian broker in Hooghly. The bill was sent to Edwards to present to Ugra Sen, a broker at Kasimbazar. Edwards was to exchange the bill drawn upon Ugra Sen for one drawn upon Gokul Das, a broker in Patna. This bill was to be sent to John Marshall in Patna in order to purchase opium for Vickers and Bagnold. Earlier in the month, Vickers had sent Edwards a bill of exchange for Rs 400 upon Ugra Sen, so that Edwards could purchase, on Vicker's behalf, silk *lungis* and other small parcels of commodities, suitable for the private trade to Europe. It is clear from the letters concerned that this was a familiar procedure. Tarwary Arjunji Nathji, the Surat banker, performed a similar function for English private traders at Bombay and Madras.

Not only bills of exchange passed between Englishmen and Indians in different regions, money and goods were also transacted. In 1699 John Smith at Dacca sent Rs 2000 to Richard Edwards to be sent on to Jairam Malik, the house-broker in the English factory at Hooghly, while a further Rs 1000 was to be invested by Edwards on Smith's behalf at Kasimbazar. Edwards also, on at least one occasion in 1670, sent goods with an Indian merchants as far afield as Gauhati in Assam. The produce of this transaction was to be collected at Dacca by Smith and either employed there, or returned to Edwards in bills of exchange.

All of it gives us a clear indication of the extent and importance of the circulation of goods and money on trust among Englishmen and Indian merchants in the private trade. On the Coromandel coast, English private traders sheltering under Kasi Viranna's influence during the 1670's found it easier to obtain commodities, which could be purchased at cheaper prices than those available to the Company. There was also much to be gained by keeping, wherever possible, agents at the sources of production. This was especially true of the diamond trade through Madras, where diamond merchants charged relatively high prices. To this end Thomas Pitt regularly entrusted large sums of money to his agent Rama Chand.

Associations between English private traders and Indian merchants transacted business over the whole spectrum of maritime trade in India, Persia, the Red Sea, the southeast Asian archipelago and China. One particularly successful example of this type of commercial eclecticism was Thomas Pitt. He employed Khwaja Surhaud, the eminent Armenian merchant in Bengal, in obtaining goods for his ship, *Sedgewick*, bound from Bengal to Persia, and for another vessel sailing to Mocha in the same season. Another of Pitt's prominent Indian contacts in Bengal was Mathuradas. Pitt also relied heavily upon the sound judgement of his

Indian merchants to secure good quality commodities at cheaper prices than those available to his competitors. Pitt's ability to obtain goods from the archipelago, shipped to Coromandel in Dutch vessels, was regularly based on the intelligence he received from Indian merchants at Madras.

It is clear that merchants did serve in many capacities for the private interests. 'Partner' is not really a suitable word to describe the relationship for it implies too rigid a connection. Merchants operated for different men at the same time. Adiappa Narayan, governor Richard Benyon's *dubash* at Madras, conducted an impressive business in his own right. The merchant dealt with a great number of Indians, ranging from peons and coolies, through all sorts of commodity-merchants, *dubash*, and artisans, to the Company's merchant, Tambi Chetty, and local Indian dignitaries. His European customers and clients included his employer, Richard Benyon, and a cross-section of the most eminent Englishmen in Madras, along with a number of Portuguese inhabitants. In much the same way William Monson was served for twenty years by Bundla Krishna, while also utilizing the services of other prominent merchants of Madras like Tambi and Tulasinga Chetty.

Monson also employed his *dubash's* son as his personal servant. Just as families worked for the Company over time so did they also for the private traders. A short statement of Benjamin Boucher's affairs at his death in September 1705 gives us a tantalizing glimpse of some of the connections. Boucher's official position was the Company's *zamindar* at Calcutta, to which he was appointed in 1704. The Company's broker, Janardan Seth, was a close associate of Boucher. Through Janardan, Boucher transacted with Janardan's brother Varanasi Seth, and with Collerchurn, Janardan's *gumastah* in Hooghly. At the same time Boucher employed a merchant named Caggou as his factor at Balasore. He was also involved with various other Indians, including one Suffachund the *chawkidar* of Govindpur. Unfortunately, the fragment does not permit us to locate these people more firmly, but it is clear that there was a widely ramifying network of personalities, each with their own areas of influence and connections.

A more definite association between English private traders and an Indian merchant can be found in the papers of Francis Pym. In Bombay, Pym and his partner, Robert Hunt, dealt mainly through Gopaldas Laldas. Between 1750-1752, together with Brabazon Ellis, the associates lent money on respondentia for ships travelling to Basra, Mocha and Jiddah. After the various discounts were deducted the transactions amounted to over Rs 74,000. During this period Pym, Hunt and Gopaldas Laldas bought and sold ships, the Indian purchasing at least two from Pym and Hunt. They also traded in cotton, through the cotton-brokers Kirparam and Naththu, and a variety of other commodities: pepper, olibanum, coconuts, betel nut, coral, rice, chintz and cutlery. The list of Indian merchants involved is quite lengthy, many of them appearing regularly. Pym and Hunt were obviously involved in the money-market, dealing with the banker Tarwary Arjunji Nathji, and appear to have been agents through whom bills of exchange could pass regularly between Indian merchants. Their connections among the English servants included the future governors of Bombay, Charles Crommelin and Thomas Hodges, and Laurence Sulivan, the future chairman of the East India Company.

The picture that emerges from such a brief survey of the relationship between Indian merchants and the English corporate and private interests is one of infinite variety, colour and movement. In the early years especially Indian merchants were absolutely necessary for a successful English commerce in India. By the middle of the eighteenth century they were not so crucial. Over the years Englishmen built up a body of knowledge about Indian trade, and this was communicated in the conventional wisdom of each generation of English servants. But more than this, the Company's gradual moves conceding its servants greater latitude in private trade permitted a better initial capitalization of the private interests.

The growth of an organized English money-market, albeit one with a substantial local involvement at Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, gave the private interest greater flexibility in its trading enterprises. However, there is no reason to suppose that this development was inherently destructive to Indian merchants involved in the Anglo-Indian maritime trades. The expansion of trade into the interior still required large numbers of Indian associates as agents, but it is true that important functions like banking and shipping were being taken over by the English. Shipping was obviously crucial, but there is no evidence to show that, at a time when shipping space was at a premium, English ship owners discriminated against Indian merchants as such. So we are left with the question of why Indian merchants appear to have lost their pre-eminence in Indian's maritime trade by the second half of the eighteenth century.

In his study, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat c.1700-1750*, Ashin Das Gupta has contributed a persuasive answer for the Gujarat region, where he argues that the degeneration of traditional political controls formed the prime cause. This was certainly a large part of the problem, but it does not explain why the English could assume such a significant proportion of India's maritime commerce. If things were that bad for the locals, why then could the foreigners see any benefits, not only in trade to Europe, but also within India and the Indian Ocean? It seems to me that the answers to these questions can be found in the dual roles played by the English servants of the East India Company.

The major distinction between the English Company and Indian merchants can be seen as the consequence of specialization. There is no doubt that the Company specialized in its capacity as a long-distance overseas trader, and that the joint-stock organization was considered necessary for the Company to maximize its profits. Its interest in peddling as such was thus precluded by the scale of its enterprise and the cost-structure immanent to it. However, the reverse of this, the highly individualized Indian merchants operating in all the markets, a lack of specialization would not appear to be crucial. It is easy to assume that economies of scale and an integrated commercial structure are necessarily better than looser, more individualized and extensive small scale operations. The strength of the monolith can be seen as having the potential for overcoming the differentiated and individually weaker personal merchants. Viewed in this way there is a possible explanation for the English rise to pre-eminence within India's maritime commerce.

However, there is a need for a large measure of subtlety in this explanation. On reflection, various points require reconsideration. Fernand Braudel's studies into late medieval European commerce suggest that specializations is not so crucial in traditional commerce. Braudel's extraordinarily lucid lectures, *Afterthoughts on Material Civilisation and Capitalism* offer us some similarities between European and Indian commercial life. First, a merchant would not specialize if no single facet of commerce was sufficient to demand all his energy. This would certainly apply to most of the major Indian merchants appearing in the English records. Secondly, a lack of specialization would also appear as a reflection of shifts in profits from one sector to another. Changes in the economic situation, particularly between types of textiles, or the profitability of supplying one commodity or another, say textiles or saltpetre in Bengal, would have forced merchants to be flexible and responsive to shifts in the English demand schedules. This would, of course, be no problem for merchants who already spread their enterprises widely, but would become critical when English commercial demands grew to the stage where they were a major part of the merchant's total business activity. This would also become critical where merchants were locked into their social location and prevented from moving physically from one region to another when local conditions, famines, wars, pirates or pestilence, imposed restrictions on commerce. Finally, specialization was apparent, particularly in money-trading in India as well as Europe. The *sarafs* were an essential adjunct to English commerce whether corporate or private for most of our period.

On the English side, the Company cannot be seen as a monolith whose decisions in London were implemented to the letter in India. Nor was the Company the critical element in the relationship between the Indians and the English. The corporate interest and its prescriptions were open to interpretation by the demands of the private interests. In this way local interpretation, although tempered by the boundaries of aspirations for a landed retirement in England, came to be the critical determinant of Anglo-Indian relations. But while Indian merchants were operating as individuals, reflecting in their associations with the English the shifts in the demand schedules, the English were developing the demand schedules. They were setting their boundaries, determining their contents, and were operating a new comparative advantage. This was developed out of the changing relationships with the producers and the control over technologically superior shipping, storage facilities, and a more extensive regional application of objective commercial principles based on institutional protection for commercial property, not effective outside English settlements. The privileged positions held by the Company's servants, where the corporate needs could be more immediately manipulated to personal advantage also put at a distinct disadvantage those merchants dealing with the English. Whenever the private aspirations were checked in India, local interpretation utilized the corporate strength and position to break through the barriers. This happened more often than not in dealing with local Indian governments.

For the Indian merchants this was a crucial development because they rarely could hope for a similar capability against their governors. Although they could react against extortion they could not break out of the social position in which they were located. The situation had become critical in the degenerating political environment in the middle of the eighteenth century. Failing central controls permitted greater anarchy and extortion at the periphery than Indian merchants could tolerate. While a flexible attitude towards extortion could be borne with during brief periods of chaos, during political succession, an intensifying and expanding anarchy held little future for merchants. The traditional tolerance and remedies for extortion no longer proved feasible. Given the social constraints on the mercantile groups, allied with increasing expropriation by their traditional rulers and an intensifying commercial competition from English traders in the traditional commercial networks, Indian merchants lost their control over India's maritime commerce during the eighteenth century. They lost it to Englishmen who initially depended upon them, but who came to resent this dependence, and who utilized the corporate presence to secure and promote their own commercial aspirations.

Bibliographical Note

Research of the English private trade in India during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is still in its infancy, despite Holden Furber's seminal study, *John Company at Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1948). No other study had addressed itself to the issues until Peter Marshall published *East Indian Fortunes: the British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1976). My own work, *Foundations for Empire: English Private Trade in India 1659-1760* (New Delhi, 1980), is an attempt to place the private activities of Englishmen in the wider debate about how the British Indian empire developed. Apart from these three books private trade appears only as a minor concern in the general literature.

The one notable exception is Holden Furber's latest contribution, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient 1600-1800* (Minneapolis, 1976). This book is a fine introduction to European expansion in Asia during this period, and should be read before any other book of more specific focus. Kirti Chaudhuri's extremely detailed but immensely difficult study, *The Trading World of Asia and the English East India Company 1660-1760,* (Cambridge, 1978), is probably the only other book which really recommends itself to the interested student.

Work on the activities of Indian merchants is also scarce. Ashin Das Gupta's *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat c.1700-1750* (Wiesbaden, 1979), elegantly complements his previous essays, and opens up the area for further study. A number of essays by Sinnappah Arasaratnam, dealing with mercantile activity along the Coromandel coast, are also valuable introductions to any study of Indian merchants. Of less value, but still of interest are Susil Chaudhuri, *Trade and Commercial Organisation in Bengal 1650-1720* (Calcutta, 1975), and Balkrishna Gokhale, *Surat in the Seventeenth Century* (Copenhagen, 1979).

Let me conclude here with a piece of special pleading. There is no substitute for coming to grips with the primary documents. This is more important since the study of English private interests and Indian merchants in India is so restricted. There are two collections of private records which will prove exceptionally rewarding to students. The papers of Sir Robert Cowan in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, and those of William Monson at Lincoln, are really crying out for detailed analysis. I recommend them to students interested in the relationship between Englishmen and Indians in the eighteenth century.

14

Maritime Trade and Politics in China and the South China Sea

G. B. Souza

China's interest in maritime trade to India and the Indian Ocean antedates early modern history. During the fifteenth century, intrepid Ming mariners and ships sailed into the Indian Ocean. Chinese produce was sold in Indian ports and shipped into the Red Sea, Persian Gulf or along the east African coast. By the end of the fifteenth century, Ming China's official interest in these commercial and political links with India and the Indian Ocean collapsed. Maritime trade between China and India was sustained by junk traders sailing to Malacca and the other ports in the South China Sea. At Malacca, the Chinese encountered and traded with Gujarati and other Indian and Arabian merchants who frequented that port.

The Chinese, Indian, Arabian, Malay and non-Malay indigenous merchants who traded at Malacca probably did not realize that they met on the periphery of a geographical region in which one commercial group, the Chinese, was to perceive itself dominant. Those merchants did not concern themselves over the commercial and religious penetration by Islamic traders and missionaries throughout the Indonesian archipelago which was to significantly alter the cultural and political development of some of the indigenous state systems. Neither were those merchants particularly preoccupied by the competitive commercial activities of the Malay and non-Malay indigenous merchants which were so severely hampered by the attitudes of the local rulers towards trade and indigenous merchants.

The Indian Ocean and the South China Sea are recent terms created by geographers to delineate the physical boundaries between three regions, the Indian subcontinent, southeast Asia and China. Asian and European merchants of the early modern period would not recognize the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea as those terms are currently used. To those merchants, the area known today as the Indian Ocean was a series of seas, bays, islands, and coastal markets that stretched from and connected the east coast of Africa to the west coast of Malaya and Sumatra. The actual boundary of the Indian Ocean includes portions of the Indonesian archipelago;[1] there is disagreement whether and to what extent this current term should be applied since it is argued that the Indonesian archipelago belonged to the South China Sea in the early modern period. To those merchants, the area known today as the South China Sea was also a series of seas, bays, islands, and coastal markets that stretched from and connected the south coast of China, including Taiwan, the Philippines, the Indonesian archipelago, to the west coast of Malaya and Sumatra.

To understand the range and scale of the activities of those Asian and European merchants who participated in China's maritime trade, it is useful to mentally draw a series of more or less concentric arcs on a map of the world. With south China as the focal point on this map, the first arc is along the western border of the South China Sea and swings all the way northeast to Japan. The second is drawn to the eastern border of the Indian Ocean, along the east coast of Africa, and the third in the north and south Atlantic to include western Europe. Within the first arc, over the entire period, Chinese junks dominated maritime trade. The Chinese were joined by Japanese, European and other Asian competitors, including Siamese 'tribute' traders. In the second, Asian and European country traders (those shipowners and merchants involved in inter-Asian maritime trade) were active and the European companies were also present. In the third arc, the European companies competed exclusively between themselves in supplying Asian commodities by sea to Europe.

With the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511, Ming China and the Portuguese were involved in a fundamental confrontation between differing perceptions of the ordering of state relations and the role of maritime trade. According to Tome Pires, the Portuguese were aware of Malacca's tributary vassal relationship with China but did not anticipate a Ming military response to their conquest or an adverse reaction towards their overtures to trade.[2]

China's world order was disturbed by the Portuguese conquest of Malacca. China's world order was a set of ideas and practices towards foreign relations developed and perpetuated by the rulers of China based on the concepts of Sinocentrism, an assumption of Chinese superiority and the utilization of an intricate series of tributary relationships to justify their claims of a predominant position in the world.[3] When deliberating upon what course of action to follow towards the Portuguese, Ming officials, supported by such strong historical and conceptual attitudes, established

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[1] cf. Pearson, M. N., 'The Indian Ocean and the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century', paper presented at the Second International Seminar on Indo-Portuguese History, Lisbon, 20-24 October 1980.

[2] cf. Cortesão, A. (ed.) *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires*, 2 vols. (London. 1944, reprint 1967). pp. 118, 123-8.

[3] cf. Fairbank, J. K.,'A Preliminary Framework', in J. K. Fairbank (ed.), *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), p. 3.

the extent of the threat posed by these new barbarians to China and decided upon the manner in which the Portuguese were to be controlled by considering the current importance of Malacca and trade to China.

Ming official involvement in maritime enterprise had diminished dramatically and the Portuguese were correctly perceived as possessing a limited military threat to the security of China. Consequently, but only for a short period, Ming officials at Canton followed a policy towards the Portuguese which may be construed as a form of appeasement supported by feelings of Chinese superiority.[4] After the death of the emperor, Ching-te and the ill-conceived martial actions by the Portuguese at Canton in 1520, Ming officials reformulated their policy towards the Portuguese, ordered their exclusion and implemented a ban on all dealings by Chinese with them.

Conditions on the south China coast by the third and into the sixth decade of the sixteenth century permitted a rise in lawlessness, corruption and those forms of marginal social behaviour so common to maritime regions, smuggling and piracy. Although banned, the Portuguese sustained themselves on the Fukien and Chekiang coasts by participating in piracy and smuggling. Conditions conducive to such activities changed as a result of Ming naval and military efforts to control these coastal areas and the Portuguese sought an unobtrusive site further south on the Kwangtung coast to establish annual markets and trade. By the mid 1550's, Ming officials were persuaded or corrupted to permit the Portuguese to live and trade at sites near or in the Pearl River estuary first at Shang-ch'uan, then Lampacau, finally Macao.

Canton and Macao

China's maritime trade was centred at the principal ports of south China: Ningpo in Cheikiang, Amoy (a term used for the ports of Chang-chou and Ch'uan-chou) in Fukien, and Canton in Kwangtung. Shanghai, the major port in Kiangnan province, was to emerge and grow in importance in China's maritime trade only late in the eighteenth century. Although the markets in these ports received some commodities from great distances outside the provinces in which they were located, their participation and activity in maritime trade was linked to the characteristics of expansion or contraction in their regional or provincial economies.

The maritime trading success of the Chinese merchants from these different cities was determined by a number of important factors. One such factor was the maritime tradition of the mariners of south China, especially of Fukien; another, and perhaps as important, was the comparative differences in the ease of access to profitable trading Commodities and to overseas markets from south China's ports. Fukien, in the late sixteenth century, produced large quantities of silk and sugar that were in demand overseas; its merchants were well organized and prepared to compete with other maritime traders at home and abroad. Fukien's advantage in maritime trade was, perhaps enhanced by its ports being closer to Japan, which was China's primary export market over the sixteenth and into the eighteenth century and, in general, there was less bureaucratic interference at Amoy than at Canton.

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[4] For an extended discussion of *chi-mi* policies, elements of which were present in the Ming official attitude towards the Portuguese before the imperial ban, cf. Lien-Shang Yang, 'Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order in Fairbank, *Chinese World Order*, pp.31-3.

After establishing themselves on the Kwangtung coast, Portuguese trade from Macao to Japan, the Philippines and India experienced phenomenal growth in both volume and value in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The growth in Portuguese trade from China was aided by Chinese imperial edicts and official attitudes that restricted maritime trade between the Middle Kingdom and Japan. Japanese and New World silver imported by the Portuguese into China arrived at Macao and, on account of that port's position as an adjunct of Canton's market, was disseminated from Canton, almost without exception, throughout the entire Ming economy.

There was a dynamic, evolutionary relationship between the Portuguese at Macao and the Ming, and later Ch'ing, officials and merchants at Canton. The improvement in Portuguese relations with Ming China paralleled the growth and development of Portuguese colonial and commercial institutions at Macao and their commercial successes in trade with Japan, the Philippines and India. In 1595, partly in response to pressure from Ming officials for more stability and accountability in the contracting of silk purchases from Cantonese merchants and partly because of the interest shown by several of the more prominent and wealthy Portuguese merchants' groups, the Portuguese *Senado da Camara* (municipal council) at Macao assumed the sole responsibility for the negotiation of silk contracts on behalf of and between individual Portuguese merchants and their Cantonese counterparts.[5]

By the third decade of the seventeenth century, when António Bocarro compiled and wrote his history of the Portuguese Empire in Asia, *O Livro ao Estado da India Oriental,* the pattern of Macao's economic relationship with Canton had evolved certain characteristics. Portuguese access to Canton's market and China's trading commodities was regulated usually to two, but, upon exceptional circumstances to three, annual fairs. These fairs occurred several months prior to the departure of Portuguese shipping in different monsoon seasons from Macao for India and Japan. A small number of rich and influential Portuguese merchants were empowered by

the *Senado da Camara* to attend the fair. They contracted with the Chinese and supervized the loading of all Portuguese purchases, raw silk, silk piece goods, gold and all other items.

After obtaining permission to trade which involved paying the ground rent for their presence at Macao to Chinese dynastic officials, the Portuguese initiated contractual negotiations with the major Chinese *quevees* [K'uai] (merchants/brokers) for the large quantities and best qualities of the available trade items, particularly raw silk and silk piece goods. The Portuguese would then, in the case of silk piece goods, advance substantial portions of their capital to these Chinese merchants who contracted the requisite number of looms and weavers to supply these orders. Such contracts were not without risk to both parties. Bocarro, whose ethnocentric bias is obvious, wrote that 'there are many [Chinese merchants/brokers] who entrust great sums of money and goods with the Portuguese, and consequently the Portuguese with them, but it has been and still is frequently seen that these *quevees* embezzle the money of the Portuguese and flee without returning it to them'.[6] Despite incidents of embezzlement by both merchant groups, the Portuguese obtained credit and received merchandise on consignment from Canton's *quevees*. After these contracts were agreed and another substantial gift presented, Chinese officials announced an open market; the departure of Portuguese merchants and merchandise from Canton was, again, linked to the payment of a gift to the appropriate officials.

The importance of Canton's relationship with Macao and Cantonese *quevees* with Portuguese merchants is that they represent an added dimension of partnership, albeit involuntary in certain cases, in European relations with China. The activities and the number of Chinese junks from Fukien are depicted as dominating maritime trade in certain markets such as Japan, the Philippines, and others in the South China Sea in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Yet, when Portuguese trading activity from Macao, on account of that city's dependent economic relationship with the Canton market, is added to the direct Cantonese involvement in China's overseas maritime trade, Kwangtung's role is favourably enhanced and requires reassessment.

With an insatiable demand for silver during the late Ming, China's merchants were attracted to those markets in which they could sell their produce for that metal; their interest in trade with Japan and Manila logically dominated their, as well as Portuguese, resources. Other markets in the South China Sea also benefited from this expansion in the region's maritime trade. The mainland southeast Asian states offered few commodities of great intrinsic value or of interest to China, Japan, India or to the Spanish in the Philippines and, via the Manila galleon, in the New World.

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[5] cf. Da Cunha Rivara, J. H. (ed.), *Archivo Portuguez-Oriental,* 6 vols. in 9 (Nova Goa, 1857-76), 3, pt. 1, pp.481-2 and pt. 2, pp.545-6, 763-4 and 926-7.

[6] Boxer, C. R., *Macau na Epoca de Restauracão* (Macau, 1942), p.38.

Tonkin, Cochin-china (together today's north and central Vietnam), and Siam (Thailand), on account of Chinese imperial restrictions on direct trade betweeen China and Japan and their geographical location, attracted Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and other merchants. Further south, in the maritime southeast Asian states, the Portuguese failed to maintain Malacca's pre-eminence as the central regional market for spices, especially pepper and cloves. The Chinese competed against Indian, Malay and non-Malay indigenous merchants, as well as the Portuguese from Macao, in markets of Java, Sumatra and the Celebes for a portion of that region's spices and aromatic woods.

From Ming to Ch'ing

The invasion of Ming China by the Manchus intensified internal economic and political instability in that country. The establishment of the Dutch East India Company, a potent European maritime power and a virulent anti-Iberian competitor contributed to the diminution of maritime trade in China and the South China Sea in the seventeenth century. Fortunes were still made in maritime trade but the availability of commodities was jeopardized as south China became the battleground in the struggle for political control between the Ming and the Ch'ing, as the Manchu dynasty was called. The risk of piracy, intervention, and competition from the VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie,* Dutch East India Company) weighed on Ming and Ch'ing officials, as well as on Chinese, Portuguese and other investors' minds.

The merchants and traders of south China involved in maritime trade endured the dislocations in their livelihood in the transition from the Ming to the Ch'ing with varying responses and successes. At Amoy, the rise and fall in the fortunes of the Cheng family, Cheng Chih-lung and Cheng Ch'en-kung, characterize these ports' comparatively successful, although temporary, amelioration of the disruption in maritime trade. Through a series of 'combination of commerce; mediation among foreigners, Chinese officials, and Chinese merchants and pirates; and control of their own naval forces', the Cheng family contributed significantly towards the maintenance of Fukien's strong involvement in maritime trade.[7] After the Portuguese were expelled from Japan, Fukien's junks, the majority controlled directly or indirectly by the Chengs, dominated maritime trade in that market much to the chagrin of the VOC.[8]

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[7] cf. Wills, Jr., J. E.,'Maritime China from Wang Chih to Shih Lang', in J. E. Wills, Jr. and J. D. Spence, *From Ming to Ch'ing: Conquest, Region and Continuity in the Seventeenth Century (New Haven, 1979), p. 219.*

[8] cf. van Dam, P., *Beschijvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie,* The Hague, 7 vols., [Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatien. Grote Serie, vols. 63, 68, 74, 76, 83, 87, 96] (1927-54), 74, pp.383-553 and J. Hall, 'Notes on the Early Ch'ing Copper Trade with Japan', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 12 (1949), 444-61.

On the Kwangtung coast, at Macao and Canton, the commercial relations and the pattern of interdependence between Portuguese merchants and Cantonese *quevees,* as described by Bocarro, were severely strained and approached rupture in the late Ming period. The deterioration in their relations and the tension between these two groups was linked to the cessation and decline in Portuguese trade from China to Japan, Manila and India. Macao's prosperity evaporated by the time that the Tokugawa officials in Japan implemented anti-Iberian and exclusion policies, the Spanish Crown's officials at Manila interdicted direct trade with the Portuguese in China, after the restoration of the Crown of Portugal from Hapsburg Spain, and Dutch naval power rendered the passage from China to India almost impossible.

The decline in Portuguese trade influenced an already disrupted market and caused severe fluctuation in the supply and demand of large quantities of highly valuable commodities at Canton. The politics of survival for the Portuguese at Macao demanded a pro-Ming stance which included the provision of small scale military forces and equipment to support that failing dynasty. The consequence of supporting the Ming also threatened the continued existence of that European community. Canton was sacked by Manchu forces in 1650. And the economy and maritime trade of Kwangtung province, became a victim in the struggle between the Ming and Ch'ing.

Fukien initially escaped harsh treatment in this conflict but, after the Cheng family's involvement in the siege of Nanking in 1659, the Ch'ing policy of the evacuation of south China's coastal population and prohibition of maritime trade was implemented with greater force in both Fukien and Kwangtung. Cheng forces, despite the expulsion of the VOC from Taiwan in 1662, were incapable of pursuing policies that would enable them, or the Ming dynasty that they supported, to re-establish a viable political and military presence on the mainland.

The loss of Taiwan for the VOC had an immediate impact on their trade in Chinese merchandise to Japan, India and Europe since their sources of supply were disrupted. The VOC's efforts to restore these sources were first by force and then by Company trading expeditions and political overtures to the Ch'ing at Canton and Peking. When those efforts failed, the VOC relied upon a combination of suppliers of Chinese merchandise including Dutch private traders (the *vrij-burgers*), Chinese and Portuguese traders.

Kwangtung, controlled by forces nominally supporting the Ch'ing was embroiled in the 1660's in implementing the coastal evacuation policy. When the Ch'ing contemplated the dismantling of the Shang feudatory regime in that province in the 1670's, Kwangtung was, again, involved in conflict, known as the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories (the rebellion of the three feudatory princedoms of south China:, Yunnan Fukien and

Kwangtung), which raged from 1674 until 1680.[9] The struggle for the consolidation of Ch'ing power in Kwangtung ended with a Ch'ing victory in the Rebellion of the Three Feudatories and in Fukien, as a result of the efforts of Shih Lang and Yao Ch'i-shêng in the destruction of the remainder of the Cheng family forces and the capture of Taiwan in 1683.

Many of the markets in the South China Sea also experienced severe dislocations in their maritime trade during these years of turmoil in China. In the mainland southeast Asian states, the ruling families of Tonkin and Cochinchina were engaged in a bitter civil war. They adopted restrictive regulations on maritime trade in order to maximize their revenue receipts used in financing their struggle for power. Their fledgling raw silk and silk piece good production fluctuated and declined, this combined with regulatory difficulties diminished those markets' previous attraction for Chinese, Dutch, Portuguese and other merchants. The rulers of Siam acted in an entirely different manner; although the market never grew to impressive inter-regional standards, the Siamese were ably involved in trade to Japan, China and, for a short period, in the Bay of Bengal.[10]

Further south, in the maritime southeast Asian states, the VOC, after establishing themselves in Java, supplanted the Portuguese at Malacca in 1641 and dealt harsh blows to the politics and economies of the Malay and non-Malay state systems in the Indonesian archipelago. The VOC's efforts to centralize much of the region's pepper trade at Batavia met with success but their efforts to monopolize clove production in the eastern Indonesian archipelago were tenaciously resisted. Far from being omnipotent, the VOC spent much of the mid-seventeenth century thwarting economic and political competition from the sultanates of Macassar, the Celebes, and Bantam, in Java. Although the Portuguese from Macao and the Chinese were active, especially at Bantam in purchasing pepper, the commercial rise of Macassar and Bantam was linked primarily to trade with India and the Indian Ocean via India and European company and country merchants who exchanged Indian textiles in those markets with Malay and non-Malay indigenous merchants for cloves and other items. In order to eliminate these sources of competition, the VOC with its indigenous allies occupied Macassar in 1667 and supported the establishment of a pro-VOC regime at Bantam in 1682.

After the Ch'ing firmly established their control over south China in 1683, there was a marked increase in China's maritime trade. From Japan to Manila to Acheh, Chinese junks, in numbers and in the values of the goods they imported and exported, dominated most of those markets in the South China Sea in the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century. The maritime trade in those markets, however, declined in value and in importance. This decline was in part a result of a world economy being formed with European company, Asian and European country traders arriving to trade in China from Europe, India and the Indian Ocean. Chinese merchants from Chekiang, Fukien and Kwangtung, as well as the Portuguese at Macao, competed in the primary markets in the South China Sea such as Batavia and Manila.

Batavia

Batavia, in Java, was one such primary market developed by the VOC, employing imported Chinese labour, and regularly visited by Chinese junks since the early seventeenth century. The VOC decided in the early 1690's to cease trading directly with China and to rely upon Chinese and Portuguese merchants to supply them with Chinese merchandise at Batavia for the Company's trade to Europe and the Indian Ocean. The reason for this decision was the failure in the VOC's diplomatic initiatives to obtain more favourable trading conditions from Peking.

Chinese maritime trading activity at Batavia over the entire eighteenth century was dominated by the junks that arrived from and departed for Amoy, Canton and Ningpo. From 1684 to 1754, for example, the total arrivals were 853; 385 from Amoy, 127 from Canton and 119 from Ningpo with the remainder coming from Japan, Tonkin, Manila and Shanghai. When the numbers and size of junks from Canton and Portuguese ships from Macao are combined and then compared with the tonnage of the junks arriving from Amoy and Ningpo, the Cantonese and Portuguese tonnage surpassed that of Ningpo and closely approximated, equalled or surpassed Amoy.[11] Fukien's domination of the Batavia trade was seriously contested by the combined activities of the Cantonese *quevees* and Portuguese at Macao.

Macao's prosperity was long diminished but its market relationship with Canton and Sino-Portuguese commercial relations permitted this rivarly between Fukien and Kwangtung. Portuguese and Dutch records reveal that the produce which the Portuguese sold at Batavia was purchased at Canton and, in many cases, the Chinese goods freighted on the Portuguese ships were on the Cantonese *quevees'* accounts. The Cantonese merchants were also capable of manipulating the Macao customs duties rates on the goods that the Portuguese ships imported from Batavia on their behalf.

The commodities which the Chinese and the Portuguese sold at Batavia in the late seventeenth and the entire eighteenth century reflect a major change in the structure of maritime trade in China. With the emergence of demand for tea, Europe's interest in raw silk and silk piece goods from China, which had dominated for most of the seventeenth century, was curtailed. Tea was the most important commodity traded by the Chinese and the Portuguese at Batavia.

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[9] cf. Kessler, L. D., *K'ang-hsi and the Consolidation of Ch'ing Rule, 1661-1684* (Chicago, 1976), pp.81-90 and J. E. Wills, Jr., *Pepper, Guns and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China, 1662-1681* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), pp. 154-7.

[10] cf. Viraphol, S., *Tribute and Profit: Sino-Siamese Trade, 1652-1853* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977) and Ishii Yoneo, 'Seventeenth Century Japanese Documents about Siam', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 59 (1971), pp. 161-74.

[11] cf. Souza, G. B., 'Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, c. 1630-1754', unpublished Ph. D. dessertation, University of Cambridge, 1981 , pp.282-6. [This work has since been published as : G. B. Souza, *The Survival of Empire : Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea, 1630-1754* (Cambridge, 1986). *Eds.*]

The commodities that the Chinese and the Portuguese purchased at Batavia consisted of merchandise the VOC obtained from throughout the Indonesian archipelago, Sri Lanka and Europe. Pepper was a particularly important commodity purchased; large scale purchases of this commodity from the VOC were not an innovation in the pattern of trade in the South China Sea, but an intensification of an existing commercial relationship. The quantity of pepper purchased at Batavia suggests that annual supplies in the port/markets of south China, barring significant losses by shipwreck, sustained a rise from 4000 picols(133 ⅓ lb/picol) in the 1680's to 20-26000 picols in the early years of the first decade of the eighteenth century.[12]

China's demand for pepper from the South China Sea in the early eighteenth century had important implications for the English East India Company(EIC) and VOC trade in that commodity. Although there was a general stability in the supply of pepper to the East India Company and VOC, the total exports to Europe were not exclusively dependent upon European demand but fluctuated on account of instability in supply from producers in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, European company difficulties in obtaining capital for the purchase of these supplies and, of primary importance, demand from the China market. It is possible to compare the amounts of pepper that the EIC and the VOC carried to Europe with those exported by the Chinese and the Portuguese from Java to China. The volume of pepper imported by the VOC into Europe dominates this comparison. A trend suggesting an equality, if not a slight overall advantage, in the quantities of pepper supplied to Europe by the EIC and to China by the Chinese and the Portuguese is also evident from the late seventeenth and into the first three decades of the eighteenth century.[13]

By the 1710's the Ch'ing, absorbed in the court politics of succession, renewed its immediate interest in the southern periphery. This concern developed on account of the popular support shown in south China for the *Chu San T'ai-tzu* (the third Heir Apparent of the Ming royal house), the *I-nien* revolt (an insurrection led by a Buddhist monk of the same name in the Ta-lan mountain area near Ningpo), and the dramatic increase in bandit bands operating in the Ssu-ming mountains (also near Ningpo).[14] Fearing the reimportation of anti-Manchu ideology and pro-Ming support

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[12] Ibid., pp.293-4.

[13] Ibid., pp.294-5.

[14] cf. Wu, S. H. L., *Passage to Power: K'ang-hsi and his Heir apparent, 1661-1722* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), pp.106-11.

from overseas Chinese, the Ch'ing implemented a ban on overseas trade in 1717.

The Ch'ing maritime trade ban temporarily disrupted Chinese trading activities at Batavia but the Portuguese from Macao, who were excluded from the ban, benefited and attempted to alter their dependent relationship with Canton. It was, however, the VOC's decision to return to trade directly with China at Canton from Batavia and Europe in the 1730's that caused a decline in profits from the sales of Chinese goods to the VOC at Batavia. Although they continued to dispatch shipping and especially after the massacre of the Chinese population in 1740, Chinese and Portuguese interest in trade at Batavia for the rest of the eighteenth century was emasculated.

After successfully crushing an anti-Manchu rebellion on Taiwan by 1723 and with the official revocation of the ban on overseas trade in 1727, Ch'ing policy towards Chinese participation in maritime trade was to encourage that activity but, more importantly, to place it under tighter official controls. Chinese contracts with foreign traders were also the target of increased regulation. Canton grew in importance as European Company and Asian and European country trade with China expanded. By 1754, Ch'ing officials decided to intensify their reliance upon existing *hongs* (merchant associations) to control foreign trade at Canton.

From 1755 to 1761, Ch'ing officials initiated and developed a control model over China's foreign trade that became known as the Canton system. All trade in which foreigners participated was centralized at Canton. Bureaucratic control over Chinese transactions with foreigners was consolidated with the *hong* establishing a *co-hong* (an enlarged merchant association) in 1761, entitled the *Wai-yang hong*. This system of control over China's foreign trade was maintained into the nineteenth century.

The expansion in maritime trade to China in the eighteenth century was influenced by Chinese supply and the interaction of Chinese and European country trade in the South China Sea. It also fluctuated on account of European naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea and the struggle for empire in India, and relied upon demand for Chinese produce in India, the Indian Ocean and Europe. The activities of the various European companies in China and their trade to Europe attracts a great deal of attention as a result of the importance of that trade in economic terms, the drain of precious bullion from Europe, and its influence on European society, especially in art.

The activities of Asian and European country traders and their interaction with European company involvement in the maritime trade to China and the South China Sea from India and the Indian Ocean in the eighteenth century, certainly, receives less attention than European company trade to China from Europe. Until relatively recently, the commercial decline of Surat and Malabar's position in Asian trade was viewed largely in an European imperial context.[15] It was the establishment of British dominion in Bengal and the expansion of the opium trade to China in the late eighteenth century, it must be remembered, that reversed the drain of Europe's bullion to China.[16]

Recent research into Portuguese country traders' involvement in maritime trade from China, at Macao, to India and the Indian Ocean reveals a story of enterprise and initiative on a small but widespread scale. As their search for profitable markets in which to trade widened and shifted in the late seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century from the South China Sea into the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese country traders from Macao were heavily involved in the sale of Chinese sugar for Malabar pepper, and came close but failed to make arrangements with the EIC at Madras in the 1740's for the transhipment of Chinese produce to India, similar to the Batavia trade for the VOC.[17] Their early involvement in the opium trade, especially with Malwa opium, to China and the South China Sea is well known; by the late eighteenth century, they imported for a short period, a significant percentage of the total brought into China.[18] Much work remains to be done on the activities of Asian and other European country traders as well as on the European company trade from India to China and how that trade influenced the economies of India and maritime trade in the Indian Ocean.

Maritime trade and politics in China and the South China Sea from the sixteenth and until the end of the eigtheenth century inherently offers a vast and bewildering panorama of investigative problems for the student and researcher. It requires inquiry into areas seemingly remote from the field of maritime trade. The internal economic political organization of the states and the individual groups involved in maritime trade as well as their attitudes, must be examined in order to determine whether change occurred or not and why over the passage of time. The organization of the European companies and their colonial societies as well as the economic policies of other Asian traders, who were the major external forces interested in the maritime trade of this region, demand investigation. Fortunately, with the growth in research and interest in the early modern economic and political development in India, China and the South China Sea, our comprehension is also improving of the relationship of land and production, political restraint or encouragement, to maritime trade and politics in China and the South China Sea.

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[15] cf. Das Gupta, A., *Indian Merchants and The Decline of Surat, c. 1770-1750* (Weisbaden, 1979) and *Malabar in Asian Trade 1740-1800* (Cambridge, 1967).

[16] cf. Marshall, P. J., *East Indian Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1976).

[17] cf. Souza, 'Portuguese Trade', pp.154-6, 300-06

[18] cf. Morse, H. B., *Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1926-9, reprint Taiwan, 1975), 2, pp.77-8, 89, 429-31.

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15

From Port To Port: Life on Indian Ships in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

A. Jan Qaisar

> The sea is a boundless expanse, whereon great ships look tiny specks; nought but the heavens above and waters beneath; when calm, the sailor's heart is broken; when tempestuous, his senses reel. Trust it little, fear it much. Man at sea is an insect on a splinter, now engulfed, now scared to death. (Letter of 'Amr ibn al-'Ās to Caliph 'Umar, cited in W. Muir, *The Caliphate, its Rise, Decline and Fall* (Edinburgh,1924), p.205).

> He it is who maketh you to go on the land and the sea till, when ye are in the ships and they sail with them with a fair wind and they are glad therein, a storm-wind reacheth them and the wave cometh unto them from every side and they deem that they are overwhelmed therein; (then) they cry unto Allah making their faith pure for him only: if thou deliver us from this we truly will be of the thankful. (The *Korān,* ch. x, v. 23).

R. K. Mookerji's pioneering work on Indian shipping was first published in 1912. Since then several scholars have contributed to the theme in articles and chapters in books on economic history. Lately interest on Indian shipping has increased dramatically. Part of this new interest focuses on shipbuilding technology, as distinct from the study of the commercial aspects of shipping. This interest in shipbuilding is in fact part of work being done on the history of technology in medieval India. However, two aspects of maritime history have so far been largely ignored: the internal organization of life on board Indian ships, and Indian maritime rituals, superstitions and celebrations.

These gaps derive at least partly from the lack of source material concerning Indian shipping. Indeed, any attempt to produce a detailed history of Indian shipping prior to modern times is an arduous and at times depressing task. Information is like the pieces of a jigsaw from which some bits are missing. Thus one's reconstruction remains incomplete. So far we lack access to logs and other records of Indian ships (if indeed they survive at all) comparable to what is available for European ships. Thus we have little or no data on titles and numbers of officers and crew, on victuals, on cargoes, on dates of sailing, or on details of particular voyages. Persian sources are often fragmentary and meagre in their information; thus we must often depend on European records.

In this gloomy context, the discovery of a sea-travelogue in Persian—the *Anis-ul hujjaj* written by Safi bin Wali Qazwini (Mulla Safi-ud din) is of great significance. Mulla Safi-ud din sailed in 1669-70 in the *Salāmat Ras* from Surat to Jiddah in order to undertake the pilgrimage (*hajj*).[1]

The following study is based mostly on this manuscript, and on other Persian and European sources. It aims to present at least some glimpses of the management of Indian ships of the period, and life on board them.

Advance warning was given to the commercial classes of a ship's intention to sail from a port. Unlike in Europe where this was announced through notices at established commercial offices, or was published in newspapers, in Indian ports the date of a ship's departure was declared by word of mouth. The news was most likely to be spread by brokers who acted as 'intelligence reporters' on their client's behalf. A merchant, or ordinary person, needing space aboard a ship had to contact her owner or master (*nakhoda*), often in person. *Anis-ul hujjaj,* advises the intending passenger to select a ship himself, and not be guided by others, except to compare his own assessment with that of a trustworthy person. For superstitious reasons, the intending passenger might sometimes rely on an omen for his selection. He was advised to ensure that the ship he chose was neither small nor old, and that her length was more than her breadth. He should also satisfy himself as to the quality and condition of the masts and rigging. Finally, he should be convinced that the ship's crew was efficient and industrious.

Accommodation for passengers was provided either on decks (*ársha*) or in cabins (*balanj*). Persian sources use another term *dabosa,* which has been defined as a cabin below the deck for the wife of the ship's *nakhoda*, as well as for the harem of the passengers. But in practice a *dabosa* was not always meant for women; it could be hired out to males for private gatherings. Abbé Carre, a French traveller during the second half of the seventeenth century, records that the largest cabin—the 'stateroom' of an Indian ship aboard which he travelled from Surat to the Persian Gulf was hired out to a

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[1] I have used a transcript of the manuscript available in the Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. The manuscript (*Anis-ul hujjaj*) is lodged in *Dār-ul Musannafīn,* Azamgarh. Also see Rieu, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3, p.980.

Persian merchant for his half-a-dozen wives for about Rs. 2000. A medium sized cabin cost about Rs. 600. Other small places and corners on the deck cost a little over Rs. 400. These fares certainly did not include food, because the ship's staff did not supply this.

The names of the passengers were entered in a register (*siyāha)* kept in the custody of either the *nakhoda* or the *karrāni* (accountant). This must have meant that passengers were checked in as they boarded. Yet in spite of such precautions our travelogue says that while 472 passengers checked in officially aboard the *Salāmat Ras,* more than forty did not figure in the *karrāni's* register. We are not told how the *nakhoda* treated these ticketless travellers during the course of the voyage.

Passengers had to be on their guard against unscrupulous *nakhodas* who often endangered the safety of the ships by overloading them with extra cargo and passengers. In one instance, vigilant passengers prevented a shipowner from doing so by protesting in unison and threatening to disembark. The shipowner agreed to their demands but retaliated by doubling their fares to compensate for his loss. Incidentally, this indicated the shipowner's ultimate authority relating to fares, which could be enhanced arbitrarily without taking any notice of an earlier contract.

Loading required the placement of goods, and distribution of weight, in a manner which would not only prevent a ship from 'working too much and thereby opening up seams' but also reduce her instability in the high seas. Proper stowage was necessary for the safety of the goods. *Anis-ul hujjaj* advises that heavy cargo should be put in the hold for it would have made the ship top-heavy if bulky goods were placed on deck. Passengers kept their personal luggage with them in a place where it would not be trampled by the bustle of the crew and would not get wet from rainwater or from the waste water flushed out from the kitchen.

Alexander Hamilton's account of the1720's of river vessels plying on the Indus is fairly valid for sea-going vessels too. He says: '...cabins are hired out to passengers, and the Hold, being made into separate Apartments, are let out to freighters, so that every one has a Lock on his own cabbin and Apartment in the Hold'. We presume these apartments in the hold were not permanent structures; makeshift arrangements must have been made to suit various requirements. On European ships extra care was taken over the stowage of cargo: dunnage, that is loose wood, horns, rattan, coir and so on, were put between casks to prevent their movement, or under dry cargo to prevent bilge water getting to it and spoiling it.

By laws in force in Italian republics during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, every merchant ship was subject to prescribed rules against overloading. When launched, two experienced inspectors measured the ship's capacity, and, in conformity, marked upon the sides a line which it was forbidden to submerge. This was in fact a crude precursor of the Plimsoll line of the late nineteenth century. There is no information on this practice in India: a ship's capacity must have been conjectured by passengers and crew on the basis of experience and observation, leading to squabbles between them.

The departure of a ship, especially a big one, was considered to be a great event at a port. Linschoten gives a graphic description of such an event near the end of the sixteenth century.

> When they will make a voyage to the sea, they use at the least fourteene days before (they enter into their ships, to make so great a noyse with) sounding of Trumpets, and to make fiers, that it may be heard both by night and day, the ship being hanged about with flaggers wherewith (they say) they feast their Pagode, that they may have a good voyage. The like do they at their returne for a thanksgiving fourteen days long...[2]

If the ships or goods, or both, belonged to a prominent merchant, or to the king, princes, governors, nobles or other officials, its sailing from the port was celebrated with much gusto. In 1608, at Surat, William Hawkins was invited by Khwaja Nizam, a well-established merchant, 'to the fraughting of his ship for Mocha, as the custom is, they make at the fraughting their ships great feasts for all the principallest of the towne...' Methwold, the President of the English East India Company in Surat, was invited by the governor of the port in 1636, to the *darbar* where the merchants of the 'hole towne being assembled, there was festivities held with musique and sweetes according to the custom of this country, and at least as nominazion of seven severall shippes intended for severall voyages...'

Since seamen were notoriously superstitious, certain rituals were also performed. A Sanskrit work of the tenth or eleventh century refers to the sipping of holy water and offering of curd, milk, rice and garland to the sea. Printing auspicious palm impressions over the vessels, especially upon the seams, was also practised. Another ancient Indian superstition was to paint an oculus on the ship's bows, pointing forwards. Taking its origin from Egyptian funeral boats (symbolizing the eye of Osiris as a guide and protector), this practice spread to many regions in the medieval period. J. Hornell found its survival in the early twentieth century on cargo craft of the Ganga. Although Persian sources do not allude to such practice, it may be assumed that such rituals continued in some form or other, for sailors are notoriously and universally conservative.

If there was no fair or favourable wind (*bād murād*) on the eve of a ship's departure, she lay anchored at the port. This situation was known in Persion as *qufl dariyā,* roughly, the river or sea is locked. An eighteenth century Persian diary describes the special rites traditionally performed on such occasions at Surat. Both Hindus and Muslims assembled together, perhaps at the mouth of the Tapti river, and threw coconuts into the water as oblations. Boats were painted in diverse colours, and a large number of people took part in this ceremony simply for fun. We may refer here to yet another maritime superstition: if a dead body or the bones of a dead person were carried on a ship, it was thought that the ship was bound to be overtaken by a tempest or calm on her voyage. Therefore, anyone wishing to carry such a 'cargo' did so secretly, without bringing it to the attention of the *nakhoda.*[3]

The picture will not be complete without a reference to the Islamic mythological figure, Khwaja Khizr. He was called *mukallaf fil bahr* (the guardian of the sea) and *khawwādul buhūr* (one who traverses the seas). Khwaja Khizr appeared when he was called upon to rescue a bewildered traveller in distress. Many rituals in India conducted in his name invariably relate him to water, ceremonial boats, and rafts (*bera*). On an island on the upper side of Bhakkar, in Sind, there is a domed shrine dedicated to Khwaja Khizr, with an inscription dating back to AD 952 which speaks of the 'water of Khizr'. In fact, he is the patron saint of sailors, and enjoys omnipresence and eternal life. The Muslim sailors of Bengal in the early eighteenth century are reported to have held Khwaja Khizr in great veneration. His blessings were invoked when a boat was launched, or was trapped in distress. In Bihar, the *mallāh* or boatmen caste consider him their patron saint . Not that he was the only maritime saint. In Laccadive Islands, to this day, every boat is dedicated to a saint. When a boat sets off, offerings are made at the mosque related to the saint concerned, and recitals from the *Korān* are arranged during the period of the voyage.[4]

After all this ado, including clearance from the custom-house, the shipowner or master would come aboard to give his last orders prior to departure. Then the anchors would be raised, and the ship would sail amidst 'a great did and hubbub' towards the high seas.

According to the *Anis-ul hujjaj,* once on, the ship's passengers especially those with a bilious (*Safarāwi*) humour, should avoid as far as possible staying on the outer side of the deck, since the rolling of the ship could induce giddiness, thus adding to one's general debility. The place least subject to rolling was the centre of the vessel near the main mast. In fact, all movement was to be kept to a minimum in order to avoid accentuating sea-sickness. But this advice was obviously meant for inexperienced travellers; the ship's crew could hardly afford to take such precautions.

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[2] Cf. *The Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the East Indies*, Hakluyt Society (London, 1885), 1, pp.227-8.

[3] For *bād murād*, see Munshi Tek Chand 'Bahār', *'Bahār-i 'Ajam, s.v. bād mukhālif.* For *qufl dariyā*, see I'timād 'Ali Khān, *Mir'āt-ul Haqāiq*, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Fraser no. 124(account dated 14 *Zul Hijja*, 1138 A.H.); also Anand Ram Mukhlis, *Mir'āt-al istilāh*, British Museum, London, Or. 1813, p.143. For superstition about bones, see Mukhlis, *op.cit.*, p.225; also *The Travels of Abbé Carré in India and the Near East, 1672-74*, Hakluyt Society, 2nd Series (London, 1947), 3, p.795.

[4] For Khwāja Khizr, see J. Hastings (ed.), *Encylopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 7 (1955), pp.693-95; George A. Grierson, *Bihar Peasant Life* (Delhi, 1975), p.403; W. Crooke, *The Popular Religion and Folk-lore of Northern India,* (Delhi, 1968), 1, pp.47, 74; Ja'far Sharif, *Islam in India*, tr. G.A. Herklots (Delhi, 1972), pp.38,39,67,135,136. Also see Henry Cousens, *The Antiquities of Sind* (Calcutta, 1929), pp. 144-47. For customs in the Laccadives, see Leela Dube, *Matriliny and Islam — Religion and Society in the Laccadives* (Delhi, 1969), pp.25-6.

At this stage we may turn our attention to the ship's crew. Abul Fazl has written that the strength of the crew varied with the size of the vessel. Generally twelve categories of officers and crew were required, with assistants and attendants under them. Foremost among them were the *bhandārī and the karrāni.* The former was the ship's steward, in charge of the stores, while the latter was the accountant (*bitikchī*) who, in addition, was entrusted with the task of providing fresh water to everyone. It is not clear whether the ship's stores could also be utilized by passengers but most probably they were meant only for the crew.

Abul Fazl refers to the *karrani's* job of supplying water, but he says nothing about how water was stored in Indian ships. The *Anis-ul hujjaj* however mentions the 'rationing of water' from *fintas,* a term signifying a 'tank' in which the ship's water was kept. European sources are more specific: water was stored in Indian ships in one or two big 'four-cornered wooden cesterne', well-pitched, and placed by the main mast ('midships'). These tanks reached from the lower deck to the bottom of the hold; water was drawn from them 'as from a well'. This method of storing water existed in ancient India also.* Even the Arabs, according to Ibn Majid, adopted the same method. It is, however, possible that wealthy individuals, and the

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* It is opportune here to clear a confusion relating to the method of storing water in ships in ancient India. Dieter Schlingloff is wrong in thinking that drinking water was kept in earthen pots (see his article, 'Kalyanakarin's Adventures: The Identification of an Ajanta Painting', *Artibus Asiae*, 38, no. 1, p.22 and fn. 46). His opinion is based first on depiction of pots in a ship shown in an Ajanta painting; and secondly on a passage in a Sanskrit work *Tilakmanjari* written by Dhanpala (10th-11th century AD). It may be pointed out that depiction of pots in the Ajanta painting does not necessarily warrant the inference that these were filled with drinking water: these might well contain *ghee*, butter or oil, as was the practice in medieval India too. Again, the evidence from *Tilakmanjari* needs some explanation. The phrase relied on by Schlingloff is: *apuritani svaduna salilena kr̥tsnany udakapatrani* which he translates as 'All water pots were filled with fresh water'. But it is inexact; *patra* can be anything for storing water, not essentially earthen pots. Secondly, Schlingloff missed another phrase in the same work which clarifies water-storage system: *svadujala kupikasu phalakasandhirandhrani,* that is, 'plugging the holes at the joints of the (wooden) planks in the troughs/wells (for storing) the sweet water', cf. *Tilakmanjari, Kavyamala* edition, no. 85 (Bombay, 1938.), pp.131, 134. Thus medieval *fintas* or 'tanks' organically evolved from the ancient wood troughs/wells. Nonetheless, this does not exclude the possession of pots for fresh water by aristocratic individuals or ship's officials for their personal use. I am grateful to my friend Dr. S. R. Sarma, Lecturer, Department of Sanskrit, Aligarh Muslim University, for taking pains in locating and translating the relevant phrases from *Tilakmanjari.* Also see Moti Chandra, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1977), pp.218, 219.

ship's officers, had pots of water for their own individual use. In contrast, Europeans used casks or barrels, which required frequent repairs and necessitated the standing services of a cooper: thus, the latter was a more expensive way of storing water than was the Indian method.

Our travelogue adds that since stored water is often distasteful, passengers should carry some fresh water in earthen pots, but these should be kept under their personal supervision and not be entrusted to their attendants. If one had to depend on stored water, it could be made palatable by the addition of sour juice of some fruits, or syrup of pomegranate. Nevertheless, the water in the Indian *fintas* was better than that in the European casks. The European barrels themselves, always smelly and contaminated, were difficult to wash properly, so it is easy to understand why, after a short time, the water in a ship was sometimes said to be 'thick and foeculent'.

If the fresh water in the *fintas* ran out when the ship was on the high seas, *Anis-ul hujjaj* advises passengers to procure it by distilling or boiling sea water. If, however, the ship was near a port or an island which she did not want to call at, small boats called *hori* and *sambuk* which accompanied her, perhaps slung on the sides like those on Chinese ships, were despatched to fetch fresh water. Incidentally, these small boats also served as life-boats in disasters. In Europe, too, getting fresh water by distilling sea water was a long-established practice. An order was issued in 1686 to provide the English East India Company with 'one Engine to make salt water fresh, with all other Materialls there unto belonging'. We do not know whether Indian seafarers made use of special boilers or stills, as was the practice in Europe, or whether their big cooking vessels (*deq*) served this purpose. It may be pointed out that even improved stills in Europe before the eighteenth century required 'high fuel consumption' to distill 65 per cent potable water from sea water in five hours.

As for procuring fresh water from the shore, it was a more tedious and wearisome process for European sailors than for Indians. Barrels or casks had to be 'got ashore, filled, manhandled back into the boat, and then rowed to the ship; then back again for more'. The task became more formidable when big storage casks, sometimes of 100-gallon capacity, were to be replenished. (A gallon of water, equivalent to 4.5 litres would weigh approximately 4.5 kilos). Not surprisingly, many European sailors developed inguinal hernia as a result of handling such weights. And getting water from the shore was a time-consuming process, too. Sometimes it took ten days to fetch the required quantity of fresh water. On occasions sailors had to dig wells, or wander upto five miles inland to find water. But Indian sailors did not have to carry *fintas* to fetch water; presumably buckets or leather bags were filled and then brought back to be poured into the *fintas*. It seems that *fintas* were not built-in structures in the body of the ship; perhaps they were portable, like the European barrels. Yet the fact that there were at most only two such 'tanks' for all the people on board indicates that they must have been too big to be handled even if they were portable, and certainly when filled with water it would be impossible to haul them up from the boats onto the ship. But there was one risk with *fintas*, as noted by Pyrard (1610-11):

> Our system of pipes is better for one reason, namely, that if any accident happens to these cisterne they lose all water at once. It is not so with us, for in case of a cannon-shot, all that can happen is the loss of one or two pipes; or any one goes bad, all the water is not spoiled. Throughout the whole of India they nowhere use our system of pipes.[5]

On the other hand, Europeans could not solve the problem of water shortages on board ship until, much later, proper tanks were incorporated in the structure.

The staple articles of victuals generally consisted of rice, *ghee, dāl*(pulses), salted fish and butter. Abul Fazl writes that dried and smoked fish were sent from Thatta, in Sind, to the ports for sale. Smoked fish came from the Maldive Island. We are told of excellent and cheap sea biscuits made from Bengal wheat for European crews; presumably Indian sailors also ate these. The *Anis-ul hujjaj* advises the intending traveller to carry sufficient provisions to last for the return voyage.

Apart from flour, rice and pulses, the list includes savoury breads (like *nān roghnī, khatāi, kulcha, sambosa,* etc.); diverse preparations of meat (roast, *qorma* and *qima*); eggs; varieties of sweets like *shakarpāra, jalebi, halwa* of pistachio, almonds, apples and pineapples, etc.; dried fruits; preserves and confections; pickles, especially of lemon, mangoes, and onion; turnips and beetroots; sugar, honey, cheese, and cooking oil. Eggs were kept in a heap of finely ground salt to prevent them going stale during the voyage. For fresh meat dishes, non-vegetarians took domestic livestock (goats and fowls), which were indulgently looked after by attendants so that they grew fat. We do not know whether Indian ships offered special spaces for animals, and hen-coops for fowls, as did Europeans ships. At any rate, such gastronomic delicacies were meant only for the affluent passengers. Since the author of our travelogue was a devout Muslim going on pilgrimage, he does not mention liquor or wine, which was 'religiously' provided in European ships. Tea and coffee also go unmentioned; tea was scarcely used in India at this time, but coffee's absence is rather surprising. As a compensation, however, tobacco smoking was recommended.

It is clear from our sources that facilities for cooking were available. Abul Fazl's list of crew has no mention of a cook. In Europe, until the first quarter of the sixteenth century a cook was not listed as a member of the ship's crew. It was only during the seventeenth century that the provision of a cook became a regular feature.

At this point we should turn to the *nakhoda khasb,* who, as Abul Fazl describes it, supplied firewood or fuel to crew and passengers. This claim, read along with Hamilton's statement that there was a kitchen in each cabin shows that cooking was not centralized. Besides the kitchen attached to cabins, passengers occupying 'places and corners' on the deck must have made their own cooking arrangements. It is possible that caste rules among Hindus also helped to multiply the number of cooking places. The *Anis-ul hujjaj* refers to 'kitchen' (*matbakh*) in the singular, but the impression gathered from the text as a whole points to more than one cooking place. Such a situation was certainly possible on big ships carrying a large number of passengers, such as the biggest Indian ship, the *Rahīmī*, which could hold 1,000 or even 1,500 passengers. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to infer that passengers and crew must have formed groups for cooking purposes. In European ships the steward was in charge of the 'fire-box' where all cooking was probably centralized in the cookroom, later called the galley. The search for fireproof cooking places led to many developments in Europe, such as brick fireplaces and brick-built kitchens. Some of the ship's officers occasionally carried copper cooking utensils, for personal use. *Anis-ul hujjaj* refers to a *chūlha dānī,* a portable earthen cooking apparatus used in India.

In any case, the number of fireplaces on Indian ships was definitely large compared with European ships. This must have added to the ever-present hazard of shipwreck as a result of accidental fire. As an example, we may refer to the destruction of the *Ganjāwar,* Shah Jahan's ship, at Surat in 1639 owing to an accidental fire on the eve of the Muslim festival of Id. But specific instances of fire accidents due to careless cooking are unknown. Our travelogue warns passengers to be vigilant against fire in general. It also speaks of the hazards of tobacco smoking, especially when attendants carried 'fire' (glowing charcoal) for the *chilim* or hubble-bubble from one place to another. Once again, no sea-going vessel is known to have been burnt because of smoking, though we are told of one big boat on the Ganga which reportedly caught fire, due to careless smoking.[6]

Seafarers faced two major risks relating to provisions. One was the harm often done to wheat, bread and other such victuals by water, especially as a result of bad weather. The second was from rats infesting ships. They not only ate provisions, but also damaged the timber. It is strange that this menace from rats is not mentioned in our sources as being a problem for Indian ships.

There is no information concerning fixed dining hours, as was the practice on European ships. As cooking was not centrally organized,

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[5] Cf. *The Voyage of Francois Pyrard of Laval,* Haklyut Society (London, 1887-90), 2, pt. ii, p.259.

[6] See Mirza Nāthan, *Bahāristān Ghaibī,* Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, pp. 444,447.

Linschoten, tells us that 'Captaine, Master or Pilote, Merchants and Passengers have everie men theire meat by themselves'.

Here two final points need to be considered. First, European ships were controlled centrally in the sense that these carried men employed by one single authority, such as the East India companies. This was of course even more true of naval ships. Even pirate vessels were no exception. Private merchants or ordinary passengers were few and far between. Further, it should not be forgotten that crew and passengers were by and large of the same religion. Thus, it is not surprising that cooking was a centralized affair in European ships, supervized by a regular cook with the assistance of a few helpers.

Indian ships might be owned and controlled by one individual, or chartered by more than one person, but all the cargo was not owned by one corporate owner, nor were all the men aboard employed by one person. Private merchants and general travellers hired space for cargo, as well as for themselves. And both the crew and passengers consisted of diverse races, creeds and castes with varying food habits and taboos. To give an example of caste rules: Linschoten tells us how once when the provisions (consisting of 'water and vegetables') of some Indian (Hindu) traders sailing in his ship from Goa to Cochin were exhausted 'they had rather die for hunger and thirst than once to touch the Christian meate'. Perhaps it might not have been possible on all occasions to stick to fixed dietary habits in full conformity with 'ritual purity'; yet at the least the situation on Indian ships must have contributed to a multiplicity of fireplaces.

The problem of preservation of provisions was apparently more acute on European ships, due to the long duration of the voyage from Europe to India, which was not less than eight or nine months. Indian ships undertook relatively shorter voyages: a voyage from say Surat to the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea ordinarily would not last more than forty days.

Hamilton says that in each cabin there was a 'place for exoneration which falls directly in water', which was possible since cabins overhung two feet. Chinese ships also had lavatories (*sandās*) provided in the cabin. On European ships 'seats of convenience' consisting of spaced planks were hung over the rail forward and the people in these seats received 'impromptu washing ... from the waves'. Our travelogue only hints at lavatories; perhaps the less affluent used places on the deck.

Medieval ships were infamous for their foul odour and terrible stench. Indian vessels may have been the worst in this respect. *Anis-ul hujjaj* says that the presence of a European *mu'allim* (pilot) or even any other European aboard a ship was conducive to better facilities than were normally available, because Europeans (*firingi*) were not only very expert in seafaring and management, but also their discipline and habits were of a

high order. It also hints at waste water issuing from cooking sites all over the deck. Added to this, bathing and washing was a luxury because of the scarce supply of fresh water which, with the huge number of persons of every description, and the vomitting and retching all around, must have further intensified the stench. Therefore, affluent passengers kept perfumes of diverse kinds, especially those derived from *gulāb* (rose) and *bed-i mushk* (*salix syqostomon*). For general cleanliness, it was the duty of the crew of a European ship to have the deck well scrubbed with salt-water hauled up in buckets every morning. There are references to cleaners or washers as a part of the crew in the *Anis-ul hujjaj*, but not details are given.

Persian sources do not tell us about the lighting arrangements aboard Indian ships; nor do Mughal paintings of boats or ships show lamps or lanterns. In 1612, when Nicholas Downton plundered an Indian ship from Lahari Bandar, he found a large number of jars of 'oyle (whereof some they eate, and some they burne in lamps)'.[7] It seems, then, that the traditional oil-lamp used on land was also used on ships. Europeans used horn-lanterns during this period. These consisted essentially of a candle with a shade or covering (made of animal horn) supported by metallic strips. Such lanterns, probably with horn shades, were introduced into India from the Persian culture area. Numerous Mughal paintings testify to their domestic use, but there is nothing to establish their use on Indian ships.

Seafarers were particularly exposed to nausea, diarrhoea and scurvy. Yet Abul Fazl's list of the crew has no place for a physician. Our travelogue merely remarks that the presence of a *tabīb* (physician) and *fassād* (blood-letter) was one of the necessities aboard a ship. Yet it was merely an accident that Abdullah Gilani, a *hakīm* (physician), was a co-passenger of the author of our travelogue. There is nothing to suggest that Indian ships were necessarily provided with the services of a medical man as was the case on European ships. Perhaps this explains why our author advises travellers to carry some medicines with them, a practice that existed in ancient India. Following the prevalent medical concept of humours, sour fruits and juice were prescribed for those with bilious humour in case of seasickness, while phlegmatics had to consume sweet things like honey and sugar. One had also to guard oneself from 'empty belly' and 'overeating', since both these conditions produced giddiness and retching due to the rolling and pitching of the vessel.

It is strange that scurvy, dreaded by seafarers, is not mentioned in the *Anis-ul hujjaj* at all. Scurvy, James Forbes writes in 1765, was 'a distemper which was then very incidental to mariners on long voyages'. To quote Forbes at length:

[7] Nicholas Downton's account in *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (Glasgow, 1905), 3, pp.284,285.

> It is various in its symptoms and progress; but is generally attended with heaviness, restlessness, swelled limbs, livid spots, and ulcerated gums: the last stage seems to be a total putrefaction; which soon carries off the unhappy sufferer. The scurvy baffles all the art of medicine; but if the patient is taken ashore, to breathe a pure air, and enjoy the refreshment of fruit and vegetables, he generally recovers.[8]

Scurvy was prevented and checked by the use of antiscorbutics. The suggestion that this medical discovery came from India remains unsubstantiated. Our travelogue counsels the consumption of fruits and sour juices but does not even hint at scurvy. Describing the first voyage of the English East India Company's ships in 1601, William Foster says that the crew of one of the ships, *Dragon*, was comparatively healthier because they were given lemon juice regularly.[9] Foster expresses surprise that the discovery of lemon as an antiscorbutic was ignored by subsequent navigators. In fact, the first account of a definite curative relation between lemon juice and scurvy comes from the journal of an English sailor, Keeling, in 1615. He notes:

> I began to allow each messe a bottle of water to drinke by night ordering also the due expence of our lemon water to prevent the scurvie.[10]

Scurvy, as stated above, could be prevented and cured by taking fresh fruits and vegetables. The procurement of these was often a formidable task for European sailors on voyages lasting several months, though their officers fared better as they carried personal luxuries such as raisins, figs and pots of jam which kept the dread disease away. During the seventeenth century, the French tried to grow salad plants on their ships, but once again only the afterguard had the privilege of consuming the green salad obtained in this manner. Ibn Battuta describes how Chinese sailors cultivated vegetables and ginger in wooden tanks on their ships. Such a practice is not recorded for Indian vessels. However, Indian officials and wealthy passengers must have fared better since they could carry personal luxuries similar to the Europeans. Yet it seems that even the ordinary Indian sailors did not succumb to scurvy, at least not in its most hideous form. The reason was the short duration of their voyages. Even a long voyage, say from Bengal to the Persian Gulf or vice versa, was broken at intervals by calling at ports on the east and west coasts of India, where locally produced fresh fruits and vegetables were available. For example Nicholas Downton, arriving from the Persian Gulf in 1611, found limes, plantains, water melons, radishes and cucumbers available at Swally Road (Surat). Similar articles were also available at Dabhol.

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[8] James Forbes, *Oriental Memoirs* (London, 1834), 1, p.7.

[9] See William Foster, *John Company* (London, 1926), p.155.

[10] M. Strachan and Boies Peurose (eds.)*The East India Company Journals of Captain William Keeling and Master Thomas Bonner, 1615-1617* (London, Bombay, 1971), p.69.

Keeling describes a tropical malady called calenture, which was marked by fever and delirium, when the victim 'imagined the sea to be green fields, into which he was impelled to jump'. I am not sure whether the *Anis-ul hujjaj's* reference to a form of sickness which brought about a violent change of temper (*taghaiyur-i dimāgh*), should be taken as an indication of the occurrence of calenture.

The other major hazard of sea travel were tempests. The first person on the ship to know of an imminent storm was the *panjarī*, a member of the crew whose duty it was to look out from the top of the mast, resting himself in the crow's nest. A hagiological work of the fourteenth century relates the story of a ship sailing from the Persian Gulf to India, overladen with cargo for the sultan of Delhi. It seems that the ship met with a tempest and started sinking. The ship's officers sought the permission of a saint, Maulana Fakhruddin Zarradi, who was aboard, to throw some goods overboard and so lighten the vessel. The saint, sitting on his prayer mat, replied that he had no authority over passengers' goods. While the dialogue continued, the ship sank, taking with it the saint on his prayer mat.[11] Even prayers were of no avail against the fury of nature.

On the other hand, calms were feared because of the delay they caused, and because of the intolerable heat. Sometimes a ship might 'lay becalmed' for ten days. Here is a detailed eyewitness account of a becalmed Indian ship:

> This induced the passengers and rich Moslem merchants to try all kinds of sorcery and witchcraft to raise the wind. Sometimes they tied to the masts little paper flags inscribed with praises of their prophet Muhammad [certainly a confusion for Khwaja Khizr]. Sometimes they carried large basins all over the ship to the principal merchants and the whole crew, just as we make a collection in France during the sermon or in a High Mass, in aid of the poor. But here these basins were filled with rice, meat, sweets, butter, fruit and other food, which were to be thrown into the sea all round the vessel. They also obliged all the followers of their faith, headed by their priests, to bathe their bodies in the sea, in order to wash away the dirty impurities they commit with their young slaves, of which there were more than 200 in the ship. Again they searched all the chests and baggage of the Persian and Armenian passengers, saying they sometimes bring back from India the bones of relations which they wish to bury in their own country.[12]

The early fifteenth century Italian traveller, Conti, described a rite performed to the Tamil god Muthiah by the Hindu sailors in a becalmed ship.

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[11] Cf. Mir Khwurd, *Siyār-ul Auliyā* (Lahore, 1978), p.285.

[12] Abbé Carré, op. cit., p. 795.

Another hazard was that of water collecting in the ship. Even in normal times bilge-water was a chronic problem, as was water gushing in because of chinks or holes in the planks. According to Abul Fazl, *khalasis* who worked under the *gumti* bailed out the excess water. But our Persian literary sources do not tell us how this was done. In ancient India water was bailed out using pots. One European account, however, hints at the use of buckets. This practice is affirmed by two Mughal paintings of the late sixteenth century. Europeans and even Chinese are reported to have used pumps to perform this task. The use of European pumps in Indian ships during the second half of the seventeenth century is indicated, but this may not have been widespread. As for the leaks, other members of the crew, called *khārwah*, took care of this recurring problem.

Foggy weather also created very serious problems. This occurred mostly near the coasts, and so decreased visibility when a ship wanted to put into port. Nicholas Downton refers to this when his ship was near the Malabar coast in 1612: '...the land being all foggie, has hardly to be discerned, and most part of our way this day, beeing by the help of the Current...'. A total shipwreck due to reefs, rocks and shallows was infrequent during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as most of the routes were well defined. Often experienced seamen who knew the conditions of a particular route and coast were hired temporarily to pilot the vessel.

Yet another peril on the high seas was piracy. Both professional buccaneers and amateur pirates were involved. Assaults on the high seas seldom came from Indian pirates; their operations were confined mostly to coastal areas. Piracy was introduced into Asian waters by the Portuguese. The Portuguese system of *cartazes* for ships in the Indian Ocean was purely a European innovation, an attempt to establish a European thalassocracy. There is no parallel to this in the maritime history of Asia. Secondly, there was a pattern in the looting of Indian ships. A Mughal historian noted that the Europeans did not molest and rob outgoing Indian ships full of Indian goods; they plundered them only when they returned from foreign ports after having transacted a profitable business and so were bringing back a vast treasure in silver and gold.

A pirate's objective was cargo and money; the ship and her crew and passengers were usually not harmed unless resistance was offered. For example, when the *Mahmudi*, a ship from Diu, was captured in 1636 by some English privateers, her *nakhoda* was 'bound both his hands and tyed match to fingers which burnt them unto the bones; and he confessed where the money lay'. No doubt merchants suffered the most, but there are also instances of pirates carrying away female passengers as slaves and concubines.

It should be noted that Abul Fazl includes gunners (*top andāz*) as one of the twelve categories of the crew. The *Anis-ul hujjaj* insists on the presence of *bandūqchis* (gunners) on ships. There are in fact innumerable references to Indian ships carrying guns. Emperor Aurangzeb's biggest ship, the *Ganj-i sawā'i*, is once reported to have had 80 cannon and 400 muskets on board. Nevertheless, Europeans made adverse comments about the use of guns by Indians. Thus Johan Van Twist notes: '...though they carry many guns, they are not protected by them, for (the guns) are on the top orlop without defence, while they do not know how to handle them.' Often unplanned cargo stowage or overloading hindered the proper use of guns. Basing his account on Dutch sources, Ashin Das Gupta elaborates on this situation:

> In discussing the problem of the defence potentialities of an Indian mercantile ship of this period, it is perhaps well to remember that the naval guns of the times were *drawn in and pushed out* of the ship's side before they could fire. The powder and shot were put in when the guns had been withdrawn and to do this effectively a corridor had to be left behind the guns, in their position within the ship, so that ammunition trolleys could quickly supply them. Thus for naval guns to be effective a considerable space had to be left empty, which the Indian shipowners were very reluctant to do.[13]

In one instance, a ship's guns had to be removed to provide accommodation for five or six lovely Persian ladies of a rich Muslim merchant's family and the only light and air they received was through the gun-ports.[14]

Anis-ul hujjaj asks the passengers to assist the crew in fighting off enemies, repairing chinks and fissures, baling out water, and throwing goods overboard. But this co-operation was voluntary. In normal circumstances, once the vessel left the harbour the *nakhoda's* authority over both crew and passengers was absolute. It was in the interest of the passengers that the *nakhoda* kept the crew under his control, so that they did not maltreat the passengers. Furthermore he had to be vigilant against fire. It was his 'awesome dignity' and stern intervention which could preserve peace on the ship. But I have so far not found any instances of a crew mutinying on an Indian ship, or any specific information on the relationship between the passengers and the *nakhoda* when the ship was on the high seas.

A European crew was divided into two watches of four hours each for each side of the vessel, that is starboard and larboard (port). We can presume that Indian crews also were divided into groups with fixed working hours. The Europeans determined duty hours by sand-glasses of thirty minutes duration. It is not clear how duty times were determined on Indian ships, in all probability sand-glasses were used as these were being produced in India in consonance with the Indian time-reckoning system.

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[13] See Ashin Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, c. 1700-1750* (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp.97-8, fn.2.

[12] Cf. Abbé Carré, op. cit., p.796.

Whatever may have been the working hours, discipline and living conditions on a ship were always harsh and ruthless for sailors. Thus Dr. Johnson remarked in 1759:

> No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a ship; for being in a ship is being in jail with the chance of being drowned... A man in a jail has more room, better food, and commonly better company.[15]

However, we may take comfort in the fact that Indian sailors were at least free from two vices ubiquitous among European seamen, that is drunkenness and swearing. For the latter, the comment of a European, John Fryer, on Indian sailors (*lascars*) employed on British ships deserves notice:

> ...the Lascars, or seamen of the country ... they are a shame to our Sailors, who can hardly ever work without horrid Oaths and hideous Cursing and Imprecations: and these Moormen, on the Contrary, never let their Hands do any Labour, but that they sing a Psalm, or Prayer, and conclude at every joint Application to it, Allah, Allah, invoking the name of God.[16]

No disaggregated data is available for the number of crew and passengers on Indian ships. The *Anis-ul hujjaj* gives the number of passengers only; that of the crew is not mentioned. However, Nicholas Downton once noted in 1612 that an Indian ship of 140 tonnes carried 75 persons, of which 32 were the main members of the ship's crew, that is, 20 'to bale water', eight 'for the helme' and four 'for topp and yards'. There were 20 boys for 'dressing severall mens victualls,' and the rest were merchants and pilgrims. There are, so far as I know, only two cursory references to Indian sailors' dress, which tell us only that they used to be 'aparell'd all in white' with white 'scull caps' on their heads.[17]

The serious and literate passengers held academic discussions, or else studied books, especially those of a devotional or didactic nature in order to pass their time. Poetry recitals and music sessions were other diversions. Some would be consoling and boosting the sagging morale of their depressed fellow passengers, or making efforts to patch up violent squabbles among them. Yet others could be seen fraternizing with everyone, generously sharing their luxurious food and drink, especially their personal supply of fresh water. Superstitious passengers would spend time taking auguries and omens from the *Diwān-i Hāfiz* or some other such popular work, to set their minds at rest. Again, some would come to the side of the deck to get fresh air and watch the remains of shipwrecks drifting past their own vessel, thus forcing themselves to brood over the transitoriness of life. Some others enjoyed gambling in their saloons, when they were not busy with their harems. Cooking kept many occupied; and if one was a physician, one was inevitably mobbed for medical advice, and thus kept engaged.

According to the maritime custom, wealthy passengers offered gifts to the *nakhoda* and other officers of the ship at the first sight of land. In one instance, each passenger gave a piece of cloth to the *nakhoda*, so that he received in total about 800 rupees worth of 'country cloth'. Meanwhile, the port officials would fire a cannon shot (*salām-i tufanq*) when they sighted the vessel, as a reminder about the obligation to pay customs duties. The ship would come closer, and now it was the job of the *sarhang*, a member of the crew, to supervize docking and landing. Finally the *nakhoda khasb* took over the task of lading and unlading the cargo.

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[15] Cited in Ralph Davis, *The Rise of English Shipping Industry* (London, 1962), p.154.

[16] See John Fryer, *A New Account of East India and Persia, 1672-81*, ed. W. Crooke (London, 1909), 1, p.145.

[17] Cf. F.S. Manrique, *Travels, 1629-43*, Hakluyt Society, 2nd Series, 1927, 2, p.78; John Fryer, op.cit., p.74.

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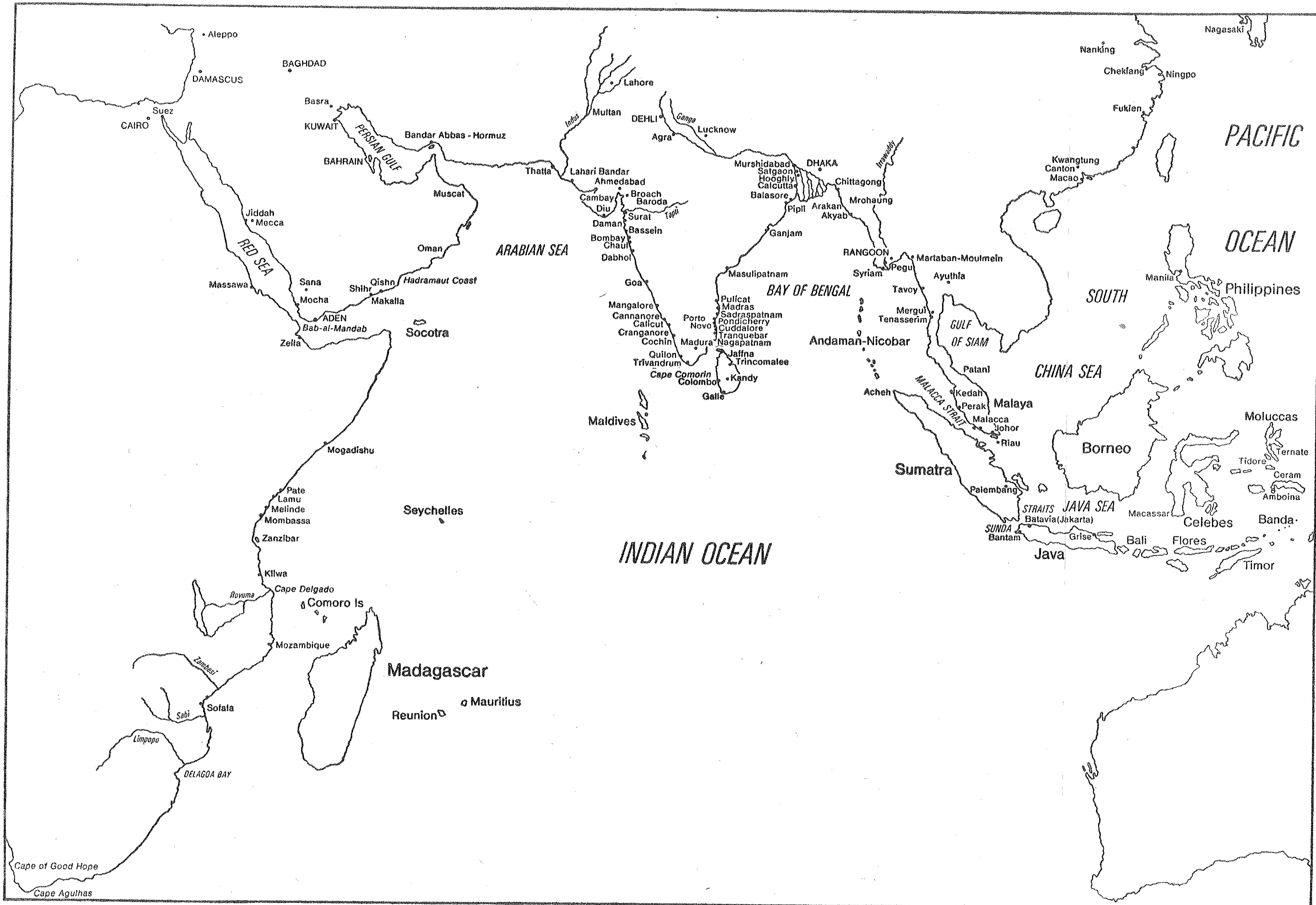
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